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# THE PROG COLLECTION

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AMAZING MUSIC

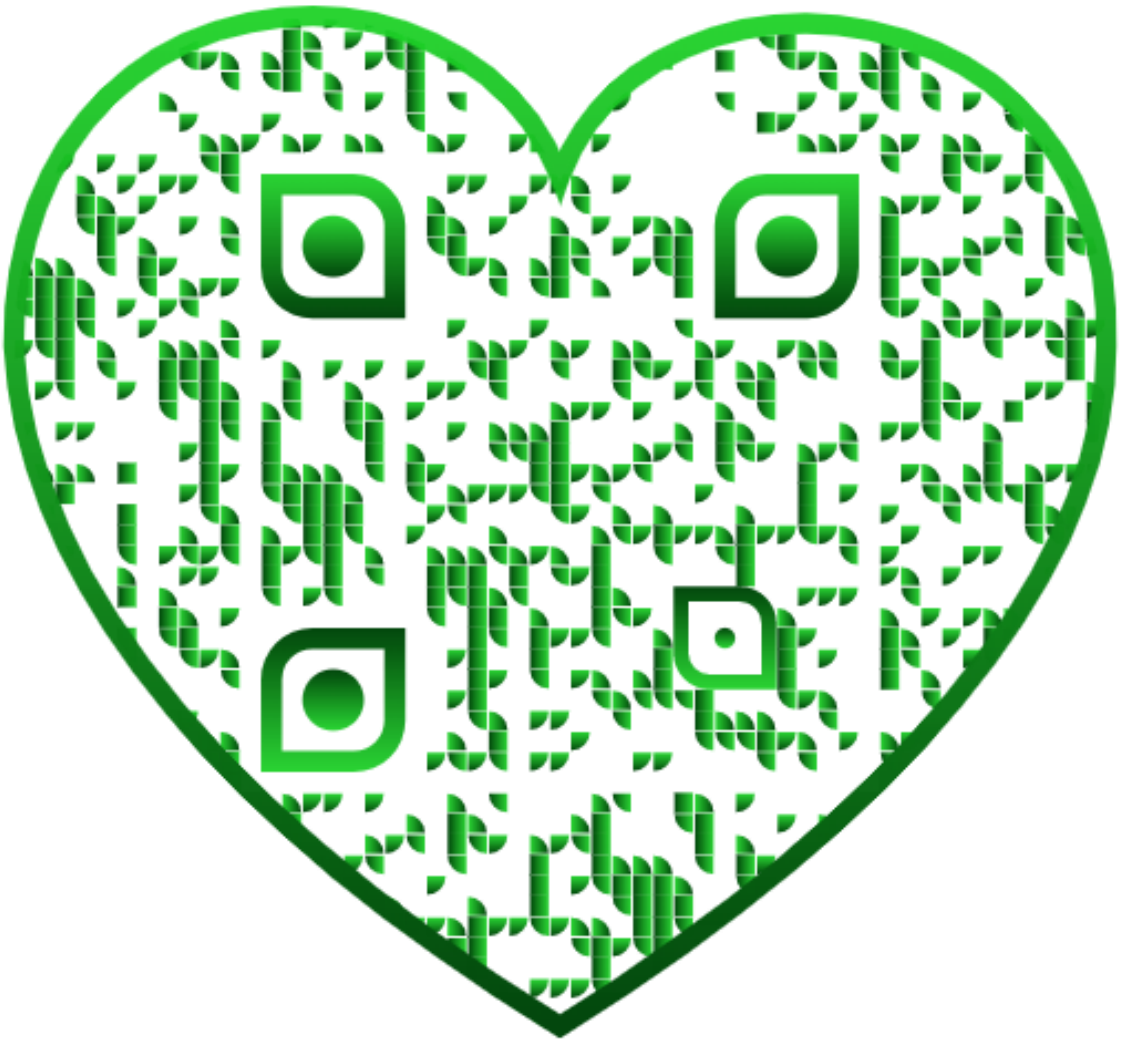
## 10 years of PROG magazine

The best stories from the first decade of *Prog* magazine, featuring Pink Floyd, Yes, Marillion, Genesis, Rush, Steven Wilson, King Crimson, ELP and more!

**Digital** Edition

FUTURE

FIFTH EDITION



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**Printed in the UK**

**Distributed by** Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU www.marketforce.co.uk – For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

**The Prog Collection Volume 1, Fifth Revised Edition (MUB5183)**
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10 Years Of PROG

Welcome to *10 Years Of Prog*. It's a special celebration of *Prog* Magazine's first decade in existence. We've been up and running for over ten years and counting, and this unique magazine – the first of its kind – celebrates some of the many highlights of our first decade. I've gone through every issue of *Prog* magazine (we hit issue 100 in July 2019, by the way) and selected what I think are the most memorable and magnificent features from our first ten years.

There's the exclusive interviews we conducted with Keith Emerson, Greg Lake and Carl Palmer when the legendary trio regrouped to celebrate their 40th Anniversary at High Voltage Festival in 2010 – the first time the three had been interviewed as ELP for over a decade. Or Rush drummer Neil Peart's first magazine interview in five years. Or *Prog* columnist (and six times World Snooker Champion) Steve Davis interviewing Canterbury legends Caravan.

At every turn within the 132 pages here there's plenty to get your teeth into with the biggest and best the prog world has to offer, with something from every year of our first decade – starting with a rare chat with drummer extraordinaire Bill Bruford from 2009, all the way through to 2019's extensive talk with Steve Hackett that graced the cover of Prog 94.

So thank you for joining us to celebrate the first ten years of *Prog* magazine. I'm sure you'll agree, it's been quite a ride. Here's to the next ten...

**Jerry Ewing - Editor**

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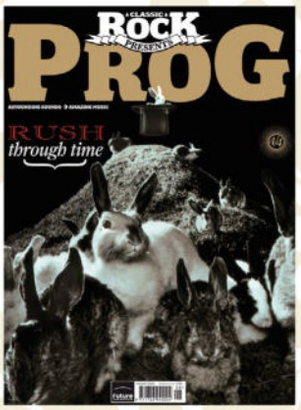


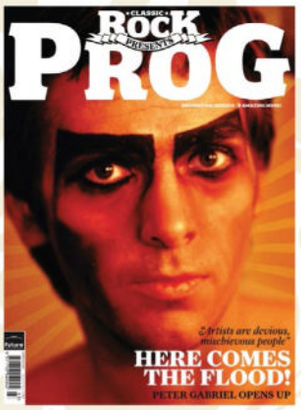

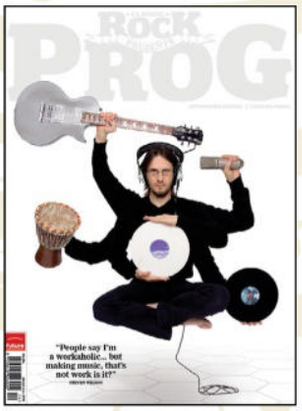

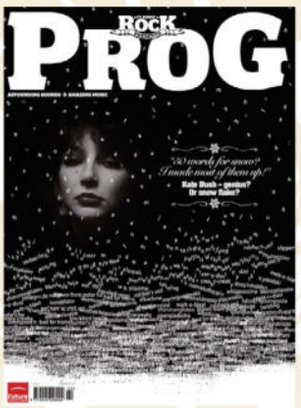

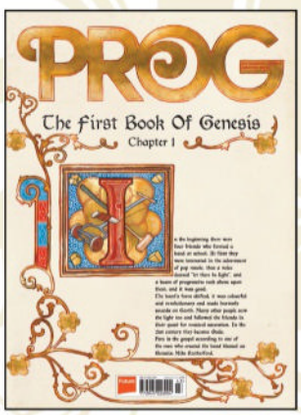


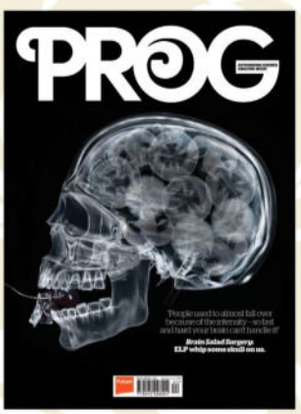

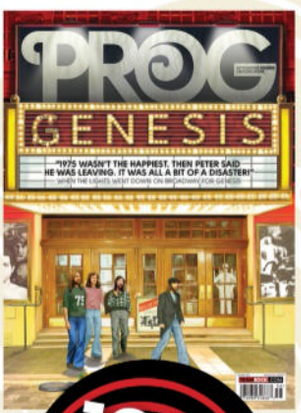


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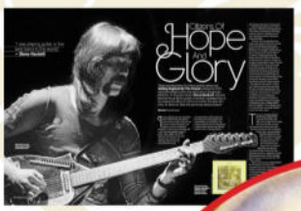

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# CRIMSON TIDES

Just like that, **Bill Bruford**'s percussive toys have been consigned to the box marked 'retired'. And yet as the only man to play for the 'holy trinity' of prog bands in **Yes**, **King Crimson** and **Genesis**, he has a fascinating story to tell, as **Paul Henderson** finds out.

Yes, 1969 (*l-r*): Peter Banks, Bill Bruford, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Tony Kaye.

PRESS

**WELL, THAT'S IT.** No more tour buses, no more soundchecks, no more set-lists to ponder, no more "Can I have a bit more vocals in my monitors please, John", no more studio tans. Having called time on his playing days and got himself a nice little office job, of sorts (see The Office boxout on p63), the only thing Bill Bruford's drumsticks are likely to be used for now is stirring tins of Dulux matt white when he finally gives the kitchen ceiling the lick of paint he's had to put on hold ("When I get back from the tour, darling. I promise this time") for the past however many years of his myriad musical pursuits.

Retired? Surely not? It's difficult to think of Bill Bruford having closed the door on his career as a musician, locked it behind him and dropped the key into an old trunk filled with memories and memorabilia collected during his more than 40 years of playing. But he has.

You could write a book about Bruford's highly achieving career as a musician (in fact he has done: the unfussily titled *Bill Bruford – The Autobiography*, reviewed last issue). There's certainly plenty of material to work with. Such as being on the forward deck with the rest of the original Yes when the good ship Progressive Rock first set sail to uncharted waters back in the late 60s – then escaping in a lifeboat just when the band were heading for the Land Of Legends. There are his stints in enduring prog chameleons King Crimson, including being there for the revered touchstone album *Red* in the 70s.

**"Prog rock was a slice of pop culture we can be proud of. But these cycles have a natural arc..."**

Less known than those two prog pillars was his remarkable band Bruford, blessed with extraordinary talent. There was the short-lived, now seemingly forgotten UK, which launched to a fanfare but then disappeared into a fog of unfulfilled potential. And, probably more fulfilling for Bruford himself, if existing in a somewhat different orbit to the rock world, have been his latter-day, final-chapter travels through the jazz world with, among others, Patrick Moraz and various incarnations of his band Earthworks.

It's certainly been quite a trip. All which brings him to: "Thank you and goodnight. You've been a lovely audience."

As well as rescuing him from unemployment, a hired-gun stint also put Bruford the unique position of having played with what many would see as the holy trinity of prog bands, certainly British ones. As well as Yes and Crimson, he played with Genesis on their 1976 tour when Phil Collins first stepped up to the mic in place of the departed Peter Gabriel and they needed a drummer.

"It's like do we thank or blame the Chinese for inventing paper?" he responds when asked whether we have the 'big three' to thank for prog rock or, more contentiously, to blame for it. "Progressive rock was fine. It was a slice of popular culture and popular history and we can be very proud of it. Terrific. It suited the time, it led the times… Wonderful. I'm not sure it's relevant now. I think these musical cycles have a natural arc, and its fruition and decay is

The Talking Drum: Bruford, with King Crimson in 1973.

MAIN IMAGE: GEMS/GETTY

Phil-ing in: Bruford joins Genesis at Hammersmith Odeon, June 1976.

Screamadelica: Live with King Crimson in '73.

Starting out: early days with Yes.

somewhere around '68 to '76 or something. I would have thought that was probably enough of that.

"Yes, it is still around, still popular and still people buying it. But I can't help that," he laughs from behind a large cup of coffee, and glasses that give him a professorial air.

Those who believe Bruford is dismissive of prog nowadays and that he would prefer to disown it are wrong, though, he insists.

"I like popular music, I like popular culture, I particularly like popular forms of music that have some relevance to the world around them. And indeed from '68 through to '76 progressive rock absolutely did. It had a ton of relevance," he says with genuine enthusiasm. "I was interested in progressive rock, certainly, because I was playing in it. But no more or less interested in jazz or anything else that I'm playing at that moment."

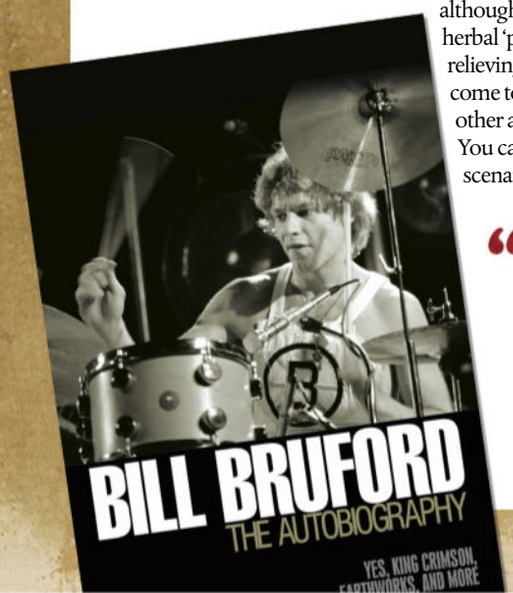
Surprisingly in some ways, Bruford says life on the road with Yes, Genesis and King Crimson wasn't much different from one band to the other, apart from there being an improving professionalism: "When I was with Yes we were kids and we were just starting and there was no money. By the time of King Crimson there was a bit more money in the 70s. By the time we got to the 80s it was all a professional accountancy-run business with real tour budgets. In my first 10 years, through the 70s, we just pissed money away. Nobody knew where anything was going."

Prog bands also largely appeared to share an on-the-road lifestyle which, although not totally devoid of chemical/herbal 'pick-me-ups' and boredom-relieving pranks, certainly didn't even come to the real excess prevalent in other areas of rock at the same time. You can't really imagine a hotel-room scenario involving Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, a groupie and a red snapper, or Robert Fripp or Mike Rutherford heaving a telly out of a hotel window.

"Yeah, the prog bands' outlook was a bit more musicianly, in counterpart to the heavy metal and blues guys," he concedes. "By the 80s we were very clean, although I dare say there was a certain amount of weed flying around in the first 10 years. Genesis was a very clean band, as was my own band. Crimson was notoriously clean. And ever since about 1980 nobody even drank before we played.

"There was a certain amount of cocaine at some points too, which was a drag. Which band? I'll keep that to myself. The problem if you have half the band on cocaine and half the band on weed, and you're the drummer in the middle, is, 'Well, what tempo *do* you want it at?'"

Contrasting the internal workings of the two bands he is most associated with, he says the modus operandi in Yes was that if you didn't like someone




**"With half the band on cocaine and half on weed, as the drummer you're like, 'Well, what tempo *do* you want?'."**

On French TV with the 'fabulously undemocratic' Crimson, March 22, 1974.

KING CRIMSON: IAN DICKSON/GETTY; GENESIS: ANDREW PUTLER/GETTY; KING CRIMSON STUDIO: GAB ARCHIVE/GETTY INSET: FUTURE/KEVIN NIXON

else's idea, it was up to you to come up with something better. "So Jon would start playing something awful on the guitar, and you'd say: 'Oh, Jon, stop. It's terrible.' 'Alright, think of something better!' Then he'd start singing and… "Jon, these words are terrible.' 'You think of something better then!' That's how I started writing."

His first experiences of Crimson, on the other hand, was of a band that was "fabulously undemocratic" in the sense that you could kind of do anything you wanted as long as Robert Fripp, a "well-meaning dictator", liked it. A difficult band to be in? You bet.

"The making of Red was difficult. The making of Larks Tongues In Aspic was difficult. Jeez, we always wanted to leave the rehearsal room as soon as possible. We never had any excess material, because as soon as we'd got 40 minutes that everybody could live with it was an album. But I've got no complaints. I never expected it to be easy.

"By the time it got to the 80s we had a fantastic King Crimson. We worked really well, with just a few ideas from Robert demonstrating the general area you'd play in. I thought the trio of *Discipline*, *Beat* and *Three Of A Perfect Pair* were exceptional records. Loved them."

As for Genesis, Bruford was never going to be part of the set-up for any longer than the one tour he participated in back in '76. Not for him Chester Thompson's job.

"When I was with Genesis I was a very badly behaved boy, and I fiddled about, and sniped from the sidelines, because I had no connection with the music. I didn't know what *Supper's Ready* meant. I could play it, but my heart wasn't in it. I was amazed how little my heart was in it."

Whether the 'big three' of Yes, Genesis and Crimson have had any influence on newer bands is not something Bruford looks comfortable answering. He'll mention "sort of neo-progressive bands like Kansas", he's aware that there is Scandinavian prog movement, points out that, of course, King Crimson is still extant, and Porcupine Tree haven't totally passed him by. But he will freely admit that he is "completely out of date. I tend to listen to jazz or I listen to silence. I haven't listened to popular music for quite a while."

These days, when everybody who was ever anybody – and plenty who were always nobody – seems to get back together at some point for one last hurrah, one last adrenalin rush, one more time in the spotlight or, especially, to top up the pension plan, it really is difficult, no matter how much you squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your brow, to imagine Bill Bruford ever on a stage again paradiddling his way through *Close To The Edge*, *Red*, *Danger Money* or any of his other musical milestones.

"If I wanted to make money tomorrow," he says firmly, "I'd call Robert Fripp and we'd do the album *Red*, all the way from front to back, exactly as per the record. We'd do that for the first set, then we'd do *Larks Tongues In Aspic* for the second set, exactly as per the record. We'd make a fortune.

"The fans can't have both: they can't have the people who created *Red* in the first place, if you only want them to go on recreating *Red*. You can't have your cake and eat it," he huffs, chomping down hard on a rich tea or ginger snap or whatever biscuit came with his coffee.

"The problem with these interviews," he says, suddenly looking professorial again, and less like he'd love to stick a drumstick up each of your nostrils, "is that you somehow have to reproduce the smile in the corner of my mouth when I say all this. Because I *dearly* love the fan, bless him, I *dearly* love him. But he always wants what he had yesterday. And that's great. But I'm going to do what I do. I'm just not into that nostalgic, 'It would be nice for the fans,' etcetera. Anyway, happily I'm retired now.

*For more information about the label and its releases visit www.billbruford.com.*

## The Office

### Goodbye set-lists, hello spreadsheets.

**Now determinedly retired from playing music Bill Bruford will be filling his time with running his own label. Not one on the lookout for up-and-coming or even established artists to record (don't be surprised if your unsolicited CD comes back marked 'Return To Sender'), but more to look after his own back catalogue. Feeling very fortunate to have the rights back, he has, as he puts it, "gathered all my babies under one roof".**

**"It's nice to get them all back, sort them out, reissue and remarket them, repackage them, add extra bits if necessary." Certainly it's doubtful whether without his own label he would have seen the albums by his band Bruford being reissued – "don't laugh", he says – on vinyl. Yes, apparently there's sufficient demand." Isn't that amazing?"**

**Bruford's Winterfold imprint deals with everything up to 1986 – "an entirely artificial watershed which is when I started Earthworks and nominally became a jazz guy" – and Summerfold is home for his jazz recordings thereon. "Winterfold has electric guitars on it, what some would call rock, and Summerfold has saxes and pianos – what some people call jazz."**

**Bruford also reckons he's pretty good at the business side of selling music. "When it's your own stuff you go in to bat for it like buggery. I'm a real terrier. In my world, if you want to make music you're going to have to tell people it exists."**

# The Hero's Return

He's back. The man who built *The Wall* in 1979 and started a division between himself, his Pink Floyd bandmates and his audience, **Roger Waters** is reconstructing his idea, brick by brick, this time with hope in his heart. Quantity surveying: **Jerry Ewing**.

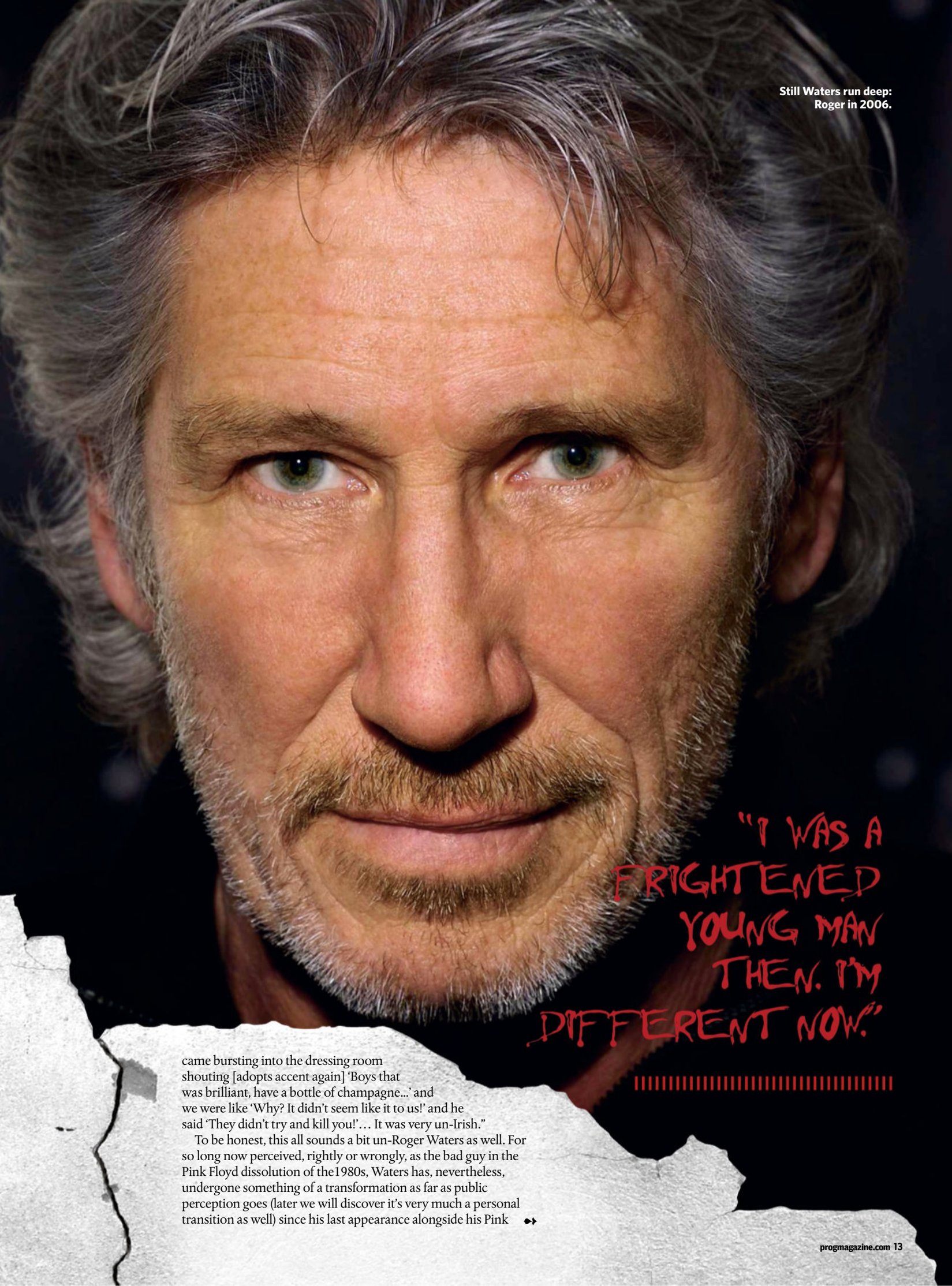
"We did a gig in Queens University in Belfast back in the 60s and we were driving through the pouring rain, a total downpour, to the next venue. I'm driving in a Zephyr Ford, the band are all asleep, I'm driving as fast as I can. I see this light ahead in the road and it's a Gardee, and he pulls me over and comes round the window and says [adopts perfect Irish accent] 'I'm sure you were going a hell of a lick!' and I say 'Oh, was I? I'm terribly sorry, I didn't realise'. And he says 'Can I ask you a question young fella? What would happen if a child or a *drunk person* were to have walked into the road?'. And I thought 'I take your point, what a brilliant and typically Irish take on things'. I've never forgotten that."

Roger Waters is on something of a comedic roll. *Prog* is sat at a press conference amid the grandeur of London's Mandarin Hotel, whilst Waters announces the European leg of his latest live venture, taking 1979's celebrated *The Wall* album back out on the road. A US leg has already been announced and starts in September of this year. Today, in the middle of a whirl of PR people, tour promoters and TV cameras, a select group of European media are to be told that as of March 21, at Lisbon's Pavilhão Atlantico, Waters and his touring band (announced in news last issue) will also take the grandiose spectacular that is *The Wall* on a tour of Europe, reaching the UK in May 2011.

The nature of the press conference is not something most UK journalists treat with a great deal of enthusiasm (a bit like the musicians that have to hold them if truth be told). Perceived the domain of the foreign journalist, replete with the obligatory "Please to be telling us a message for the people of the Finland" request, or the daily press who have little more than a cursory interest in the subject matter, the wheels of the great music PR industry work outside such showboats for most of the major music titles that fill the newsagent's shelves.

So why does *Prog* find itself seated next to two *Classic Rock* colleagues in (naturally) the back row, listening quietly and shooting each other the odd grin? Well, it's Roger Waters for starters. Not always the greatest friend of the media, and a man for whom the whole idea of communication of any kind has formed the basis of many of his works, be it with Pink Floyd or as a subsequent solo artist. We simply wouldn't be doing our job were we not to attend such an event. And also we've been granted a private audience with Waters post conference, where we can grill the man in depth. It makes sense.

"I remember this gig in Cork on the last tour, in a circus tent," continues Waters, responding to a request from a member of the Irish press for further memories he has of performing in the Emerald Isle. "It was a cold and rainy day and we blew the power out. Where we happily playing along and then the whole thing went *pffft* and there was nothing. The power had gone. Luckily the backroom boys managed to get it sorted out and we could finish the show. Not like in the old days when we used to play this little old place in Cork, I can't remember what it was called [*most likely the Arcadia Ballroom – Floydophile Ed*], and you played on a stage eight feet high so the audience couldn't get at you (laughs). We did a gig there in 1967 or 1968, and it was awful. The audience were a bit snarly. The guy who owned the club

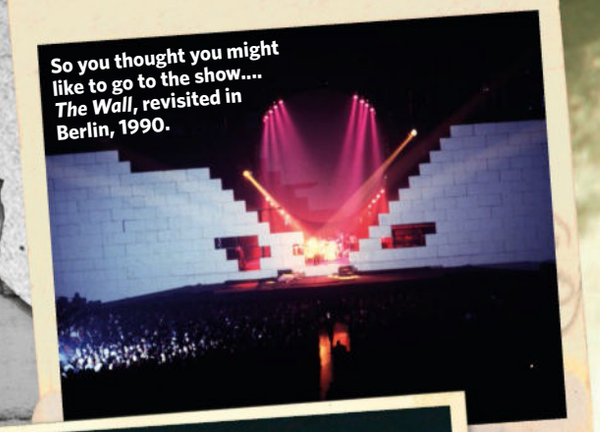


Still Waters run deep: Roger in 2006.

"I WAS A FRIGHTENED YOUNG MAN THEN. I'M DIFFERENT NOW."

came bursting into the dressing room shouting [adopts accent again] 'Boys that was brilliant, have a bottle of champagne...' and we were like 'Why? It didn't seem like it to us!' and he said 'They didn't try and kill you!'… It was very un-Irish."

To be honest, this all sounds a bit un-Roger Waters as well. For so long now perceived, rightly or wrongly, as the bad guy in the Pink Floyd dissolution of the1980s, Waters has, nevertheless, undergone something of a transformation as far as public perception goes (later we will discover it's very much a personal transition as well) since his last appearance alongside his Pink



So you thought you might like to go to the show.... *The Wall*, revisited in Berlin, 1990.

"When I'm onstage now I milk it mercilessly!"

GETTY IMAGES/ ALL OTHER PRESS

Waters on the *DSOTM* tour, 2006.

Floyd colleagues David Gilmour, Nick Mason and the late Rick Wright at London's Live 8, his evident bonhomie to his old bandmates seemingly at odds with the increasingly curmudgeonly Gilmour.

Seated in the Mandarin, awaiting Waters arrival, we are intrigued at how the man himself will deal with some of the more inane journalistic probing such events never fail to deliver. We are treated to clips in searing high definition of a seemingly deliriously happy Waters performing live on his *Dark Side Of The Moon* tour which ran from 2006 to 2008. After the usual platitudes, not to mention a false start, Waters eventually enters to polite applause, goatee-bearded and looking far fitter than many men of his 66 years. He does, however, look a tad uncomfortable. It doesn't go unnoticed that the minute he does actually appear, the sun breaks through the morning cloud cover and a parade of infantrymen, resplendent in all their finery, march past the window behind which Waters is seated.

"You'll have to speak up," he smiles through the melée. "I'm a bit deaf..."

The next half an hour flows by, Waters a delightful, sometimes self-effacing comedian, always handling even the more incomprehensible questions with good grace. We are told that the European tour will run for a course of an initial 38 dates. The band will perform *The Wall* in its entirety. That Gerald Scarfe who provided the visuals and puppets for the original album tour and subsequent film, is back on board, providing new, up to the date material for the tour. That modern technology allows the entire 8,000 square foot wall that will be built in the chosen arenas (only inside venues this time) to be used as a screen on which the visuals help the music unfurl the torrid tale of one man's breakdown and retreat from the world. And yes, there will be a plane that crashes into the side of the stage. Following on from the stunning *Dark Side Of The Moon* jaunt, it promises to be an amazing spectacle. The kind for which Waters is primarily known.

"There were very few shows, to be honest," he remarks, when we finally meet in the privacy of a smaller hotel lounge, and *Prog* asks about his memories of the original …*Wall* shows. In fact he opens our meeting with a genial enquiry about the score in the England Bangladesh cricket test, which *Prog* duly summons up on our mobile. But we digress. "I think we did six days in LA, six days in Nassau Coliseum, six days in Earls Court and five or six days in Dusseldorf... What's that? I dunno, 30-odd? So we didn't do it very often."

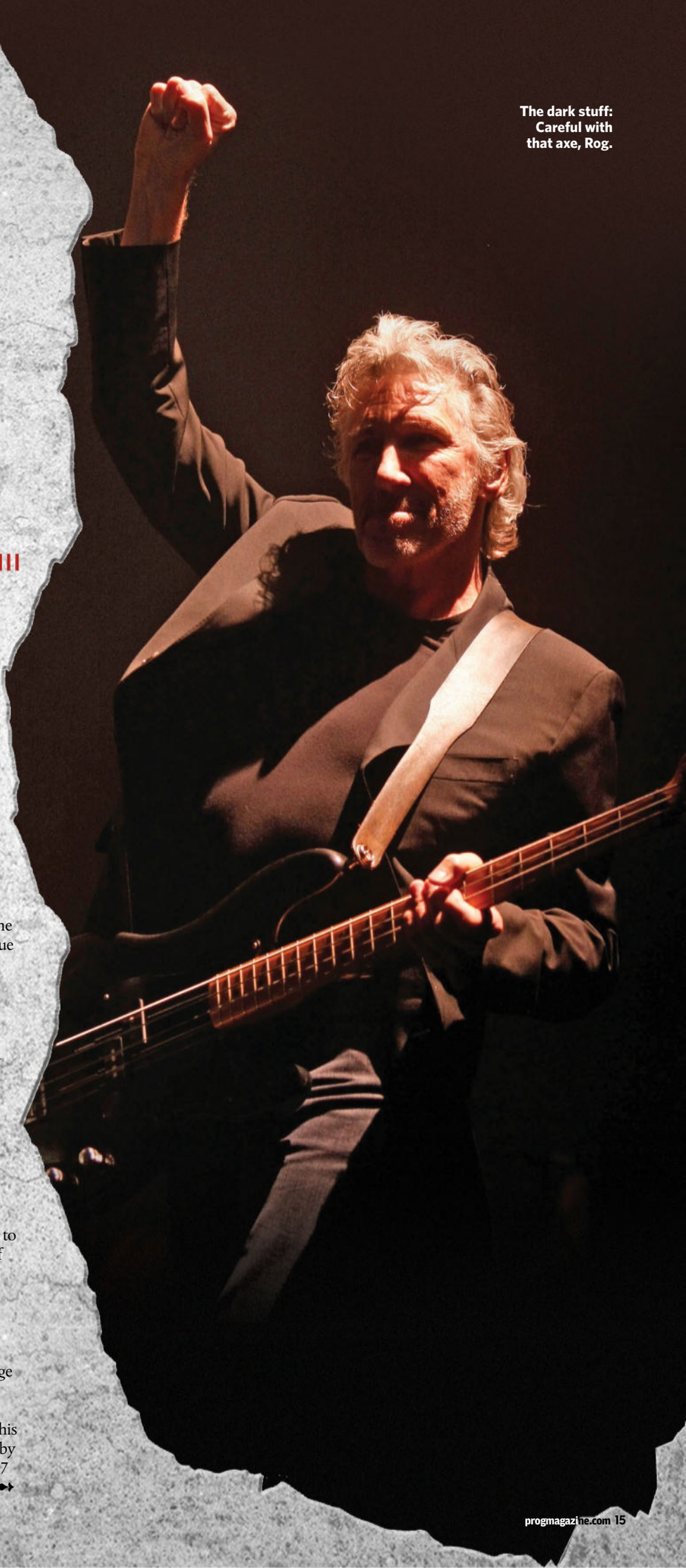
In fact Floyd played an initial 31 performances of *The Wall* in 1980 and 1981, which featured seven in LA, five at the Nassau Coliseum, six at London's Earl's Court, eight at Dortmund's Westfalenhalle and a final five back at Earl's Court. Waters famously performed the entire thing again in Berlin – after the fall of their own oppressive monstrosity – in July 1990 with such celebrated guests as Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison and Sinead O'Connor, as well as Bryan Adams and the Scorpions.

"I remember it being very exciting," he continues. "I remember the first one at the Memorial Sports Arena in LA and we set fire to some drapes after about five minutes and had to stop the show. That was very weird. We'd had to fly these drapes especially in and these fireworks had gone up and set fire to them. There was a hole about the size of a soccer ball and the thing was smouldering and eventually the room was full of smoke. Every night was real excitement. We never knew every night whether the show would work, whether the projectors would work or anything.

"We're doing a lot more shows this time around. About 55 or something in the fall and then another batch in Europe. And then we'll have to see after that, whether we take it to South America or some of the other places that I'd really like to play. "

Given the intensely personal nature of the relationship

"EVERYTHING I'VE WRITTEN IS VERY EMOTIONAL. I START PLAYING AND I GO STRAIGHT TO LUMP-IN-THE-THROAT MODE."



The dark stuff: Careful with that axe, Rog.

between *The Wall* and its main creator, one must wonder how Waters feels about taking the thing back out on the road in an entirely different era to the one in which it was created. In 1979, when it was released, it was a treatise about the disassociation between artist and audience. In 2010 the idea of the enormo-dome live spectacular, the like of which Waters himself excels at, is commonplace for most people, bands and audience alike. So much so, the idea of seeing a band in a sweaty little dive such as the Kensington Count Down Coffee and Wine Bar, where Pink Floyd made a very early appearance in 1965, would, unfortunately, seem alien to many.

"Thirty years ago when I wrote *The Wall* I was a frightened young man," Waters starts, adding "well, not that young. I was 36. Anyway, in the intervening years it's occurred to me that the story of my fear and loss with its concomitant inevitable residue of ridicule, shame and punishment, provides an allegory for border concerns; nationalism, racism, sexism, religion, whatever! All these issues and 'isms are driven by the same fears that drove my young life."

Fair enough. But if Waters feels that the thought processes that made *The Wall* are still perfectly relevant in today's society what about the fact that it's still him up on stage, performing such a burningly personal oratory.

" The emotions that drove the writing of the songs and the music become immediately accessible when I start to sing the songs again," he admits. "I've had to drop a couple of them a tone – when you get older you can't reach the high notes anymore. I think *Don't Leave Me Now* and *One Of My Turns* we've had to drop a tone. And maybe we'll have to drop *Run Like Hell*.

"Everything that I've ever written is very emotional and tied to something very real that I've felt about something. A couple of years ago we were out doing *Dark Side Of The Moon* and we started playing *Us And Them* or something and I go back to lump-in-the-throat mode. You hear the first few notes and you're right back there. It is what it is, I guess..."

The one thing that seems strikingly evident, from Waters relaxed, amiable attitude and more specifically from the footage we saw prior to the earlier press conference, which featured a beaming bassist playing up to the crowd during a rousing version of *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2* is how happy he is in his own skin these days. Given that *The Wall* was directly inspired by a notorious incident at Montreal Olympic Stadium in July 1977 when, incensed by a group of rowdy fans at the front of the ➔

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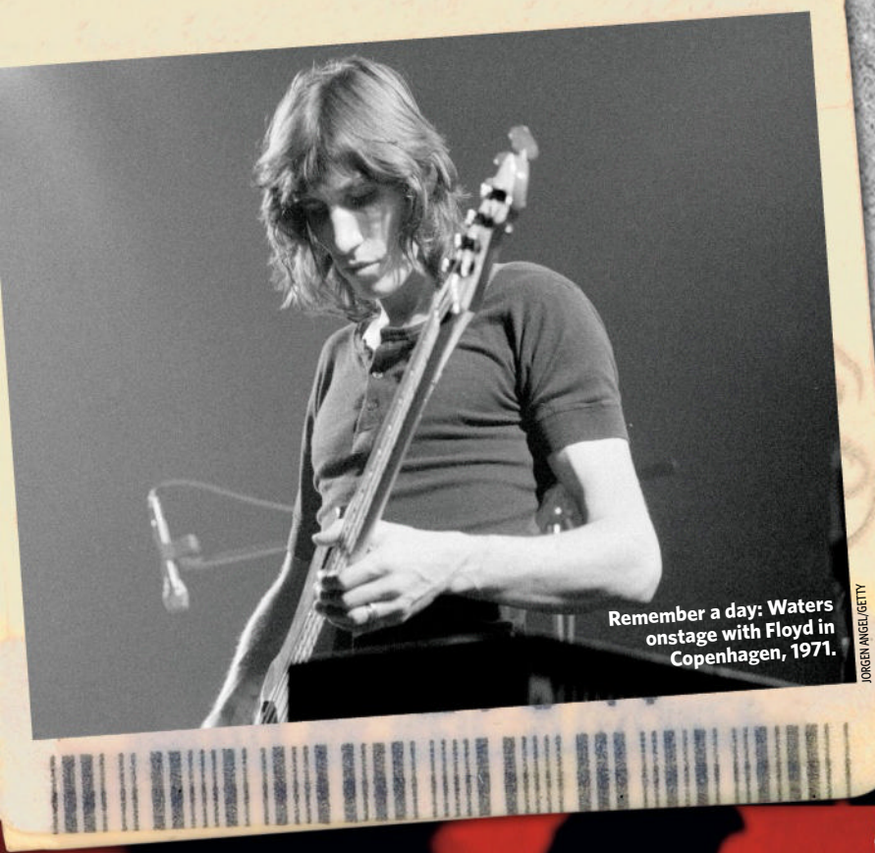


Remember a day: Waters onstage with Floyd in Copenhagen, 1971.

JORGEN ANGEL/GETTY

Tear down the wall! Waters helms a symbolic performance of *The Wall* in Berlin, July 1990.

PRESS

stage, Waters found himself spitting at them, how did he feel he had changed as a live performer over the years?

"A very interesting question," he muses. "I feel completely different about being on stage now than I did then. In the last 30 years I've completely come round to embracing the possibilities of the connection between me and the audience. And I like to think that when I'm onstage now I milk it mercilessly, ha ha. Just because it's a lot of fun. I make a lot of eye contact with the audience these days. And I really enjoy the fact that they really like the songs and I really like the fact that it feels like a community. Back then when I was onstage I was so fearful... It was like I was when I was at a party, sort of standing in the corner not talking to anybody, smoking a cigarette, almost staying 'Don't come anywhere near me'. Thank goodness I've grown up a bit since then, and I really enjoy the experience of being in front of an audience now."

You mentioned earlier that this is a huge undertaking – one that sees you dropping tones for various songs and undertaking new regime of vocal exercises. Can you see yourself undertaking a venture such as this post-*Wall*? *The Final Cut* perhaps?

"Well, I can't see myself doing this when I'm 80, you know, 55-date tours. Mind you that is only 14 years away," he grins. "And I'm sure there'll come a time when I don't want the huge undertaking. I'm pretty fit though and I have no qualms about doing this one. I have started to work out in preparation for doing it. It is physically quite demanding.

"Vocally I do about half an hour to 40 minutes a day. And I have a lesson once a week which I repeat. You'd

"I CAN'T SEE MYSELF DOING 55-DATE TOURS WHEN I'M 80. MIND YOU, THAT IS ONLY 14 YEARS AWAY..."

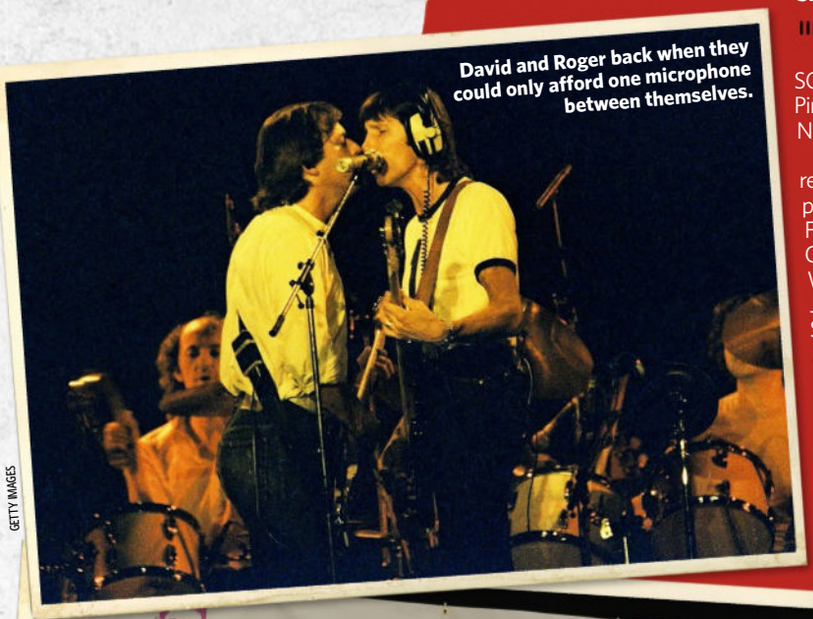
think I was mad if you saw it though. It's very specific, singing scales and things but with different in and out sounds. 'Ha's and 'he's and 'la's and things, but most of it holding your tongue out. You hold your jaw down and sing these sounds. It looks completely daft but it builds the muscle. You do need it."

Talk inevitably turns to Pink Floyd, the band who created the wonderfully behemothic prog animal that is *The Wall*, and with whom Waters so acrimoniously fell out during the making of, leaving a band that splintered finally during the creation of 1983's *The Final Cut*. The trauma of the band's decision to carry on without him is well documented to such an extent that few could believe their eyes when olive branches were extended and the band reunited for one final appearance at 2005's charity Live 8 concert in Hyde Park. Waters, for so long the aggressor in the band's relationship, views the reunion fondly.

"It was Geldof," he says, simply. "He called me as a last resort because he'd already spoken to David at considerable length and got the 'No'. And he spoke to Nick who told him 'The only person who might get him to do this is

# TURNING THE TIDE...

## Gilmour! Waters! On stage together again! Could this be the shape of Floyd to come? *Prog* gets out the crystal ball.



David and Roger back when they could only afford one microphone between themselves.

GETTY IMAGES

High hopes: Gilmour and Waters onstage in Oxford, July 10, 2010.

SO THERE WE were, Roger Waters interview in the can. The inevitable Pink Floyd question asked, and response, noted. Nothing acrimonious. No scandal. Just some nice platitudes from a one-time stream of anger.

So you can imagine we here at *Prog* were just as surprised as you readers were when we got the news that Waters and David Gilmour had performed together. The event was the Palestinian charity Hoping Foundation's Benefit Evening at Kidderminster Hall in Oxford on July 10. Gilmour and Waters (backed by a band featuring Guy Pratt (bass), Harry Waters (keyboards), Andy Newmark (drums), Chester Kamen (guitar) and Jonjo Grisdale (keyboards) performed a set that featured a cover of the Phil Spector-penned *To Know Him Is To Love Him*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Comfortably Numb* and *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2* (the last song a late addition when a fellow guest bid for it to be played).

Adding to the excitement of such an appearance was the revelation on Waters' own Facebook page that Gilmour has now agreed to perform *Comfortably Numb* at an as-yet unnamed show on Waters' US *Wall* tour.

According to a posting, he stated that the idea came about following Gilmour's appearance at last year's event (with Kate Moss), and he approached Waters with the idea of covering the old Teddy Bears number *To Know Him Is To Love Him*, as an ironic riposte to the until recent fractious relationship between the pair.

From Waters' Facebook page: "I quote "If you do '*To Know Him Is To Love Him*' for The Hoping Foundation Gig, I'll come and do '*C. Numb*' on one of your *Wall* shows". Well! You could have knocked me down with a feather. How fucking cool! I was blown away. How could I refuse such an offer. I couldn't, there was no way. Generosity trumped fear. And so explaining that I would probably be shite, but if he didn't mind I didn't, I agreed and the rest is history. We did it, and it was fucking great. End of story. Or possibly beginning."

Naturally the internet has been abuzz with rumour and conjecture about what this might mean and whether it signals a more permanent reunion. At the time of writing, all that's being talked about is the 'one off' appearance in America.

However even this step signifies an immense thawing in the relationship between Waters and Gilmour. Reports from the event stated the pair were laughing and joking like old friends. *Prog* put the rumours to the test, asking Police Service body language expert Melinda Cavaliere to cast her over this pic (left) and give us her opinion on the apparent relationship that currently exists between the two men.

"The picture shows they are having a good time," she told *Prog*. "Both parties are relaxed, there is body contact and a definite spark in their eyes. To me it looks like a genuine picture and there is no trace of the supposed animosity that has existed between these two men in the past."

Watch this space... **JE**

Roger'. So I did call him. I got David's phone number from Geldfof because I didn't have it. And he was very surprised when he picked up the phone but he spoke and he thought about it and after a day or so he said 'Okay, I'll do it'. Which was great, particularly now that Rick has died. For the four of us to get back together and do three or four songs just once was very important, especially for me. I thought it was great. I loved it."

And of the inevitable following question – does he ever think that the three remaining members of Pink Floyd might ever perform again? [See sidebar for startling up-to-the-minute news.]

"I don't know. I think it's highly unlikely. I don't think David's even faintly interested in doing that. I think he's happy with what he did. It's not a particular disappointment, particularly without Rick. I mean, as we slowly die off... I mean, maybe, for a one-off thing, a charity event like Live 8, maybe, three might be enough. I think two wouldn't really be enough. I'd be up for it, though, for sure."

Which pretty much leaves us to enquire as to whether we might be seeing a new solo album. Or whether there's more opera based activity (Waters released the chart topping opera *Ça Ira* in 2005). What has Roger Waters been working on lately?

"When I started work on this tour I was in the middle of editing the film of *The Wall* shows and a film I call *Swaddle*, which is a film of the *Dark Side Of The Moon* tour, but without *Dark Side Of The Moon* in it. I'm definitely going to put *The Wall* out at some point."

And a possible solo album?

"Oh God…," he feigns in mock agony. "Well I've got so many songs written, I keep meaning to get round to organising it. I never seem to get round to it though. It has been a while..."

Eighteen years, *Prog* tells him.

"Yes," he nods with an almost embarrassed smile. "That's a long time."

# THE EPIC SAGA OF THE BAND THAT CHANGED PROG

Featuring exclusive interviews with some of the band's main protagonists alongside a look back at their key albums – from *Nursery Cryme* to *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* – this is a must-have for all Genesis fans

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# Welcome Back My Friends...

## ...to the show that never ends.

*Welcome to our Emerson, Lake and Palmer feature which we produced in 2010 to celebrate not only the progmeisters' 40th anniversary, but also the fact that Messrs* **Emerson**, **Lake** *and* **Palmer** *reunited and performed at the* **Classic Rock High Voltage Festival** *in London's Victoria Park on July 25. Arguably one of the most inventive and bombastic of all the great progressive rock bands, we've gone some small way to honouring the band in the manner they deserve. Inside you'll find exclusive, all-new interviews with* **Keith Emerson** *and* **Greg Lake**, *with* **Carl Palmer** *taking time out from his busy schedule to answer Prog readers' queries.*

*Step inside, step inside...*

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

# The Piano Man

From clandestine meetings when they were members of The Nice and King Crimson to getting back together to work on a potential new album last year, **Keith Emerson** tells **Philip Wilding** how he and Greg Lake were always destined to work together.

"IT WAS IN the bandwagon, I think, and King Crimson's *Cat Food* was playing," says Keith Emerson, "And I turned to my tour manager, and said, Who is that? And he said, That's King Crimson, and I said, No, the singer, and he said, That's Greg Lake, and I said, Does he play anything? and he said, Bass guitar and guitar as well, and I remember going, Ooh, that's interesting!" he chuckles, "He was good, you know, and The Nice had gradually come to its fullest conclusion and I realised that I was ready to write and go in a different direction – and then I heard Greg singing."

Keith is standing outside an aircraft hangar in Santa Monica. The aforementioned Greg Lake's inside singing *Lucky Man* to himself and nursing a bruised jaw [see following Lake interview]. The pair are rehearsing for a US theatre tour that's also acting as a warm-up for their headlining show in London at the High Voltage Festival in Victoria Park in July.

They've both been here before, further north along the Californian coast with the Santa Ana winds at their backs. Keith recently picked up posters from an original gig The Nice and King Crimson did at Bill Graham's Fillmore West on the corner of Market Street in San Francisco. He'd just unpacked them the morning before we spoke.

"December 1969, that was it, and both our bands are on there side by side," he says. "Quite prophetic looking back. I remember going out to see what they were about and I heard that King Crimson weren't that happy touring anymore and I wanted to move on, so it was a bit fortuitous.

"Greg and I met up and it was a bit like cheating on one's wife. We'd meet up outside the venue or whatever and then panic when Bob Fripp came into view, you know, We can't talk right now! It was like a West End farce. We actually didn't get to meet up until we finally got back to London."

And now years later they've reunited for what could be one last hurrah as ELP, though Lake intimates that there might be more festival shows if this one goes well. According to the singer it's one last chance of reigniting the flame under their infamous live reputation, but what's in it for Emerson?

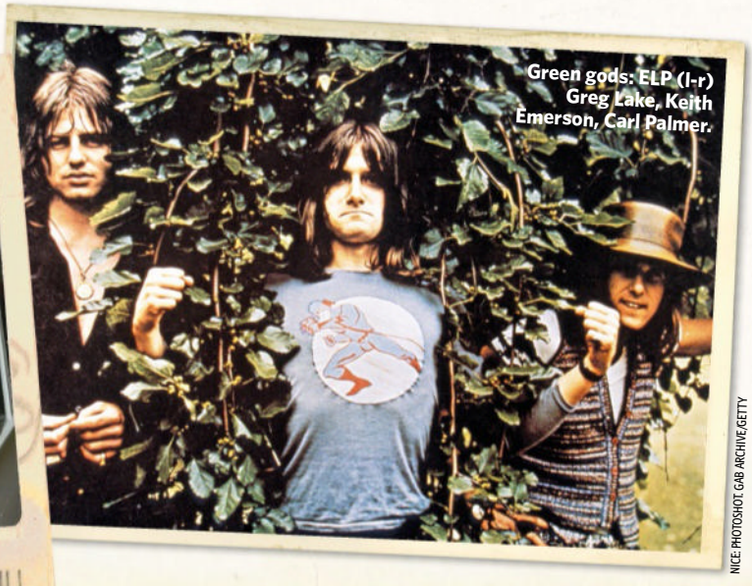
"Even though I'd been touring with my own band and having degrees of success with them…" he pauses. "The thing is you can't get away from it, being in ELP I mean, because at the end of every show people would tell you that you were brilliant and then there'd be this moment and then they'd ask when are you guys going to get back together again? Every time pretty much. And to put it all to rest in a way, you just think let's do it, you know?"

And what of the theatre tour as a duo, is it just a warm-up for the ELP reunion or something more? People always made out that you couldn't stand to be in the same room as each other, let alone choose to play and perform together for the sheer enjoyment of it.

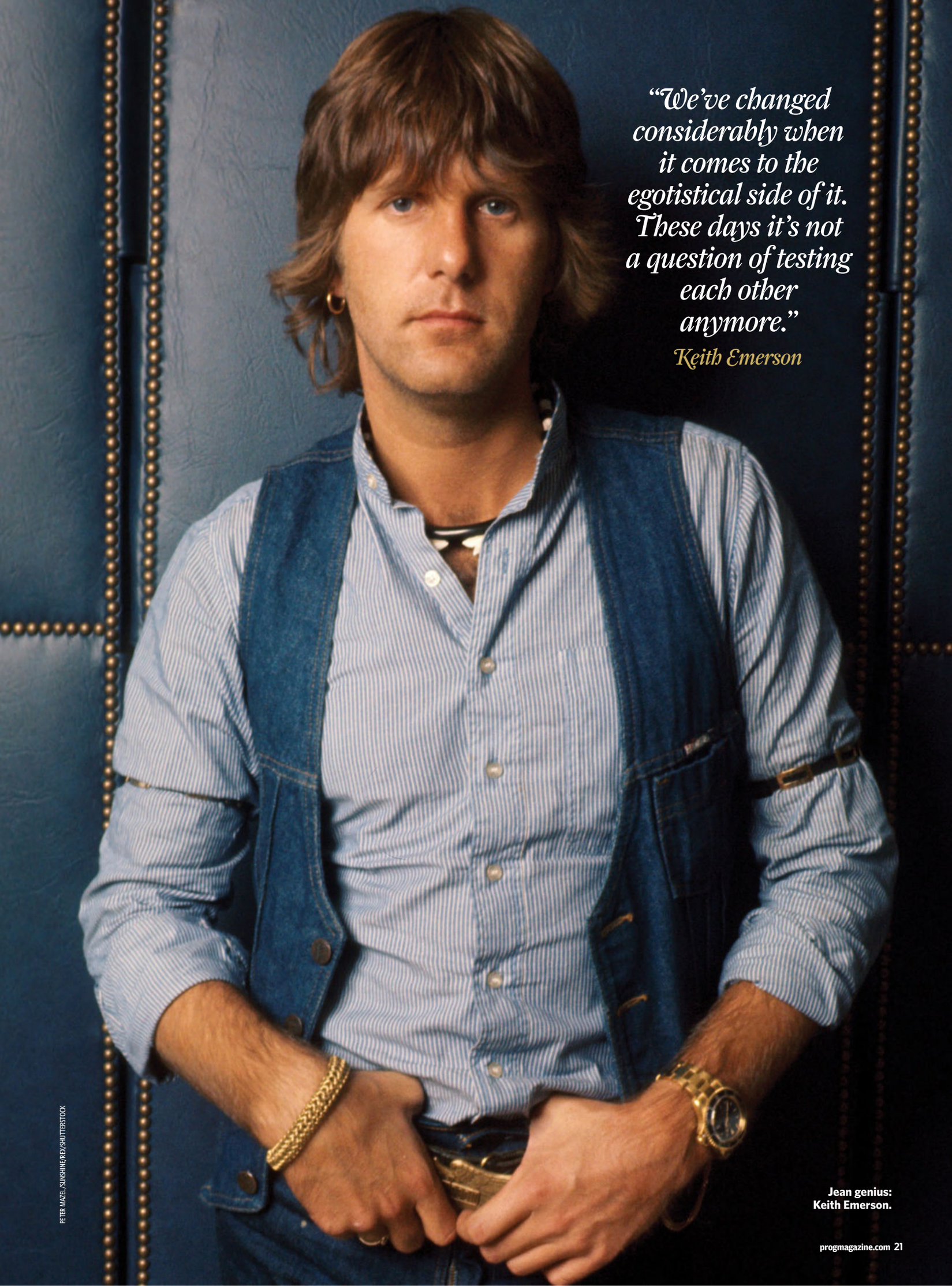
"You know," says Emerson, and he chooses his words more carefully than Lake when answering questions, "Greg and I actually got together in London at his studio to write an album and that's the way I suppose it started, one thing lead to another. This was last year, just before Christmas, December's a good month for us maybe.

"And we've changed quite considerably when it comes to the egotistical side of it, and you have to have one if you are a musician because otherwise you're never going to get out on stage. And these days it's not a question of testing each other anymore; we're very considerate and caring towards each other. Not that we weren't before, but it goes through various periods in your life where you develop a further understanding not only of yourself but in your dealings with other people. And I may have been an extreme culprit in my time with the earlier ELP, but when you reach the autumn of your years you become a little more considerate and more compassionate towards each other, so that's sort of helped." ➔

The Nice: (l-r) Keith Emerson, Brian Davison, Lee Jackson, Davy O'List.


Green gods: ELP (l-r) Greg Lake, Keith Emerson, Carl Palmer.

NICE: PHOTOSHOT; GAB ARCHIVE/GETTY



*"We've changed considerably when it comes to the egotistical side of it. These days it's not a question of testing each other anymore."*

*Keith Emerson*

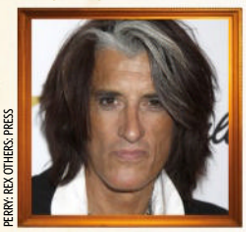
PETER MAZEL/SUNSHINE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

**Jean genius: Keith Emerson.**

THE MAJESTY OF ELP

## The classic rock world pays homage

"ELP played an important role in getting across the fact that rock musicians could actually play their instruments. We owe them a lot."
*Roger Glover, Deep Purple*



"I saw them once in Boston – they were an amazing band. At their best, ELP's records are among the greatest ever."
*Joe Perry, Aerosmith*

PERRY: REX OTHERS: PRESS

"ELP were one of the original prog rockers who merged classical and jazz with visionary art aesthetics, and an undeniable live show."
*Paul Masvidal, Cynic*

"We in Voivod are huge fans. In fact, we copied a bit of them on our song *Jack Luminous*. Piggy's guitar part was inspired by Keith Emerson."
*Away, Voivod*

BIKE: SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY ORGAN: JORGEN ANGEL/GETTY THEATRE: ALAN MESSER/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

**Chew on that, rivals: ELP at the London Pavillion, December 1971.**

**Songs in the keys of strife: Keith Emerson lets rip.**

**On his bike: Emerson in 1974.**

*"Managers would physically fight backstage at festivals to get the prime-time gig spot for their band."*
*Keith Emerson*

During the sessions for these shows that you're rehearsing, Greg said he was very moved by the way you'd adapted *Lucky Man* for the set. He sounded quite touched.

"I'm delighted to hear that, I was just dabbling at the piano one day and I thought let's see what else I can do with this theme of Greg's just to make it slightly different. Quite honestly, it's nothing that dramatic, the more that I sat at the piano I was finding different approaches and chords to *Lucky Man* and I just went, This seems to work, I wonder if Greg will like it?

"It was quite funny because when I went to Greg's house, to his studio, and I sat down and played it and I said to him, Whose song is this? And he looked at me and said, I don't know. I said, Well, you fucking wrote it! He was quite taken aback; he thought it was beautiful."

Your first official gig as a band was a bit like the shot that was heard around the world. For a lot of people you were a genuine overnight sensation even if you had all earned your stripes on the road with other bands and musicians. Greg mentioned the resentment that a lot of people felt at your so-called supergroup, but you felt the criticism more keenly than most, didn't you?

"Personally speaking I got an awful lot of flak from the press, you know, how could I break up such a great band as The Nice," says Emerson, "It was a very disturbing time for me because The Nice at that point were looking forward to going back to America and really making it over there. Then suddenly the whole plug is pulled on it and I've gone off and not even with a band to start off with, it was just Greg and I talking. We had no idea what ELP was or could become except that I felt confident that this could work, but we didn't even have a drummer. I'd already spoken with other bass players such as Chris Squire and Jack Bruce before Greg, I just knew I had to get out and do something else."

And that something else was always going to include artillery fire? Spectacular show aside, I doubt anyone in the

IAN DICKSON/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Live in London's Hammersmith Odeon, November 1972.

audience was expecting a volley of cannons during your Isle Of Wight show.

"Ha, if you've not had your head blown off by the fucking music, you know," Emerson actually cackles. "All the festivals throughout the 60s sort of demanded stunts so you could get one up on the next band. You'd go off and be like, Follow that! And I remember there was one time The Nice were on the same bill as The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, and this is before I'd really got to know Carl Palmer, and I was planning to be lowered by helicopter on to the stage and this got leaked out in the *Melody Maker* or something and it turns out that Arthur Brown was planning to do exactly the same thing!

"So I found out that he was planning to do it and he discovered that I was planning the same thing and both of us pulled the plug so no-one ended up landing on the stage by helicopter. It was like, well, if he's going to do it then I can't possibly do it… that's the way it was back then. You literally went on stage and tried to outdo the other band and you'd try to get the prime time, which was the moment just before sunset when it was still light and by the time you'd finished your show it was dark and you could use all your lights. Bands and managers would literally fight backstage, physically fight to get that spot."

Greg blames fatigue and being forced to come up with *Love Beach* for the band's demise in 1979, but how much did the crippling debt you accrued on the 1977 *Works* tour contribute?

"Greg's right, we toured extensively, 12 weeks at a time, that's an awful lot of time to be out," says Emerson. "I never actually got to see my sons grow up. It was very testing and it's not like you're going on stage to pay 12-bar blues every night. I just needed time off and I wrote a piano concerto and recorded it with the London Philharmonic and I suppose this may have caused some concern to Carl and Greg – and not to be outdone they also recorded a piece with an orchestra. Then suddenly we realised, how are we going to promote all this, and it was actually Greg who said, We've all used orchestras, let's use the same one.

"So we utilised our next advance from Atlantic Records and of course it was an awful lot of money, six million quid or whatever it was," he sighs. "So we did manage to do about 10 or 12 concerts, which culminated in filming it in Montreal and that kind of put an end to it. I think it left Greg and Carl very despondent, they may have blamed me, We'd be rich guys if it wasn't for your idea, Keith, touring with an orchestra. But it was a band decision, we all agreed on it. It wasn't just me that wanted to do it.

"The shows were really enjoyable, for me at least. It was probably a bit heavy going for Carl, but it was always my intention to give the audience what they had at home. They came to a concert, they wanted to hear and see what they'd bought on the record. I think it may have played a big part in our demise as a band, as after the orchestral tour we really had to play as a three-piece in order to pay back all our debts, so there again it was another 10-week tour and another 10 weeks of being away from our families. It was very testing to say the least."

So I imagine you're not keen to go back to all of that if this festival show goes well?

"Management are already making demands,' he says wearily. "I want to concentrate more on my writing next year. I don't think I could really put up with all the travelling, all the disruption again. It's heavy going and I'll be 66 in November." You can almost hear the idea turning over in his head in the buzzing silence of the telephone line.

"I'm looking forward to the show, but I really don't want to kill myself on the road. That's no way to go."

## THE MAJESTY OF ELP

### The classic rock world pays homage

"Keith Emerson was the Jerry Lee Lewis of the prog keyboard world. A truly amazing and one-of-a-kind showman. ELP then went on to make great records, pioneered large-scale touring and embodied the very phrase 'Super Group'."
*Jay Jay French, Twisted Sister*

"Working with ELP was one of the most exciting times of my career. Putting it all together in the studio was a lot of editing and layering. It took a long time, but the results were incredible. Some of the tracks gave me goose bumps every time I played them back."
*Eddy Offord, producer*

"People have been coming up to me saying I sound exactly like Greg Lake when I sing, which I have to take as a compliment. Oh yeah, gotta mention the Isle of Wight footage, which must be some of the most outrageous shit I've seen."
*Mikael Åkerfeldt, Opeth*

# The Bass Man

**Greg Lake**'s out on the road in America with Keith Emerson and he's sporting a shiner. **Philip Wilding** gets on the blower to make sure all is well in camp **ELP**!

**Greg Lake feels** like someone's punched him in the face. "We were rehearsing in a hangar in Santa Monica and there was this ramp and it was the same colour as the overhang and I never even saw the drop," says Lake on the phone from California, "I went straight over the edge and onto my face. I was very lucky in a way. It was," he concedes, "a complete bastard."

The only upside of Lake's shiner is who exactly he was rehearsing with at the time of the accident. As the unlucky singer was dusting himself off, Keith Emerson was somewhere across the hangar space practising trills on his piano, though you imagine even he might have looked up when he heard Lake go over the edge.

What started out as writing sessions for the former bandmates turned into afternoons and nights where the pair would play *Tarkus* and *Trilogy* in their entirety just to loosen up. Emerson came up with an extended piano arrangement for Lake's *Lucky Man* and the pair fell to talking about the young men they once were who'd written those songs. Unsurprisingly, they're currently out on a US theatre tour sharing those memories with the audience.

"When we're playing as just the two of us the songs have a different kind of appeal," says Lake, "And we thought what a nice idea in a way it would be to let people see how it was written. To let people in on that perspective and see what the process was. And the other thing, to be honest with you, was that Keith and I wanted to do something to get ramped up for this forthcoming festival."

It might sound odd to describe the latter day ELP as a hot ticket, but when it comes to this summer's High Voltage Festival in London's Victoria Park that's exactly what they are. Lake and Emerson are now in their sixties and both are feeling the weight of their collective history.

"I think," says a candid Lake, "that it really is now or never. If we're going to put this together in any meaningful way then the time is right and it was that realisation by all of us that really triggered it. Jumping on stage and being ELP again is no mean feat. We don't want to just turn up, we want to be the best we can possibly be, so that those people who see us on the day will remember the band from the 70s and they won't have to say, Oh, they were better back then, you know. This will be the full ELP extravaganza."

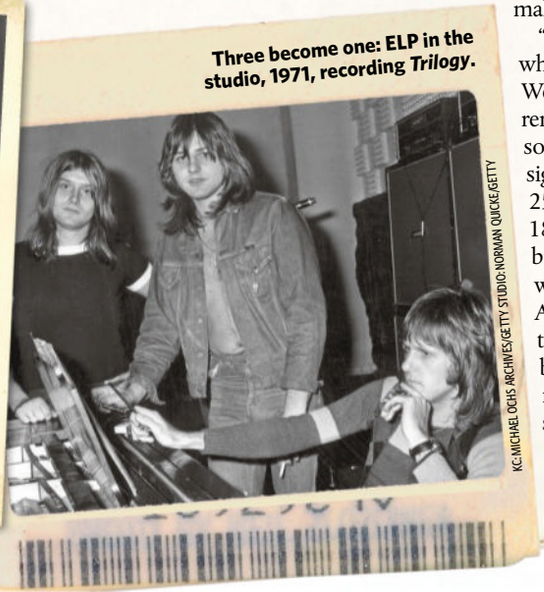
It might sound like so much hyperbole from one of rock's renowned ringmasters, but the more you talk to Greg Lake the more you come to realise that for once this might not be about the money. He talks about ELP's legacy like a man at the end of the bar mutters about the one that got away.

"It really was the fact that this was the last time we could play as ELP and still hope to achieve, the perception at least, that it is as good as it was. We felt that we could each perform at that level, but it's a challenge, as you'd expect. Some of those pieces I was singing when I was 20 years old. It's been a while."

The usually ebullient Lake admits to missing ELP when the band finally splintered in 1979. They'd reform occasionally, once, infamously, with Cozy Powell on drums so they could keep the ELP name intact. Though it was the 10 years together that cemented their reputation, it was the first five albums recorded and released in just three years that truly made their name. And, arguably, 1978's *Love Beach* that almost tarnished it for good. Emerson's still fairly bullish about *Love Beach* (though even he concedes the cover is enough to make you lose your appetite indefinitely), while Lake blames success for making them fail.

"It was indicative of where we were as a band. We broke up a year later, remember; we'd just got so tired," he says with a sigh. "We used to play 250 shows a year, 18-week tours, it just became a mind-whipping experience. And then as soon as the tour stopped, you'd be in the studio recording. And as soon as that finished, you'd be on the plane and out there

King Crimson: (l-r) Robert Fripp, Michael Giles, Greg Lake, Ian McDonald, Peter Sinfield.



Three become one: ELP in the studio, 1971, recording *Trilogy*.

KC.MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY STUDIO: NORMAN QUICKE/GETTY

Greg Lake: "Let me tell you a story..."

*"Jumping on stage and being ELP again is no mean feat. We don't want to just turn up, we want to be the best."*

*Greg Lake*

PETER MAZEL/SUNSHINE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY

## THE MAJESTY OF ELP

### The classic rock world pays homage

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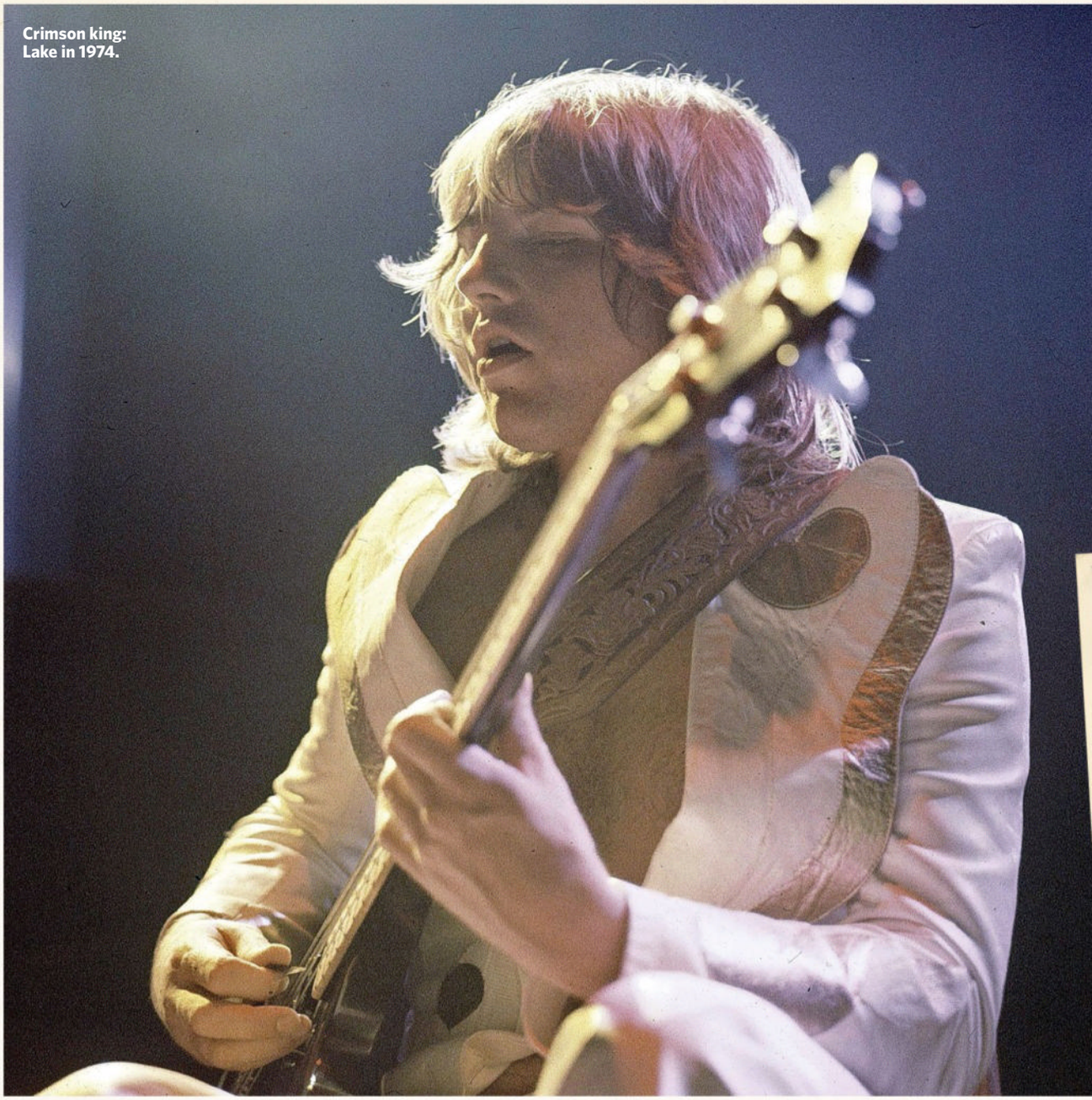
"I was and still am a very big fan of Keith Emerson. As a classical musician, his rock arrangements of classical music paved the way for me to incorporate classical music into Curved Air's arrangements."
*Darryl Way, Curved Air*

"A great band. Great musicians. The epitome of stadium rock."
*Dave Brock, Hawkwind*

"Emerson, Lake & Palmer were groundbreaking. Keith Emerson brought excitement to keyboards that had not been seen before. He was the Jimi Hendrix of keyboards."
*Mick Box, Uriah Heep*

"With *Lucky Man*, once again a great British prog band hit the charts and became part of the music that we love."
*Terry Brown, producer*



ILPO MUSTO/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

**Crimson king: Lake in 1974.**

touring again. And it was 10 years of that without a break basically.

"When it came to *Love Beach*, we actually did try to put the brakes on. We went to Atlantic Records and we said, To be honest with you we don't want to make another ELP record right now, and the late Ahmet Ertegun [the label's founder and president] insisted on us making it. There was a lot of money involved for them and he said, You owe us an album and unless we get it I can guarantee you that none of you will have very fruitful solo careers. It was sort of a fait accompli. It was just an album we'd have preferred not to have had to make as a band. Having said that we did go and make as good an album as we could. That's where we were at the time."

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Lake unwittingly set ELP's wheels in motion when he was just 12 years old. With his first guitar and the first chords he'd picked up, he wrote *Lucky Man*. The irony of that title's not lost on him years later. Keith Emerson calls him one of the most prolific songwriters he's ever met, but even he's quietly astonished that Lake could manage to write a transatlantic hit before he'd reached puberty.

"It was never meant to be anything other than an LP filler," says Lake with disarming honesty, "We needed an extra track for the record and we were in a rush, so that was the song that had to go on. Nobody thought it was going to be successful, we sort of forgot about it.

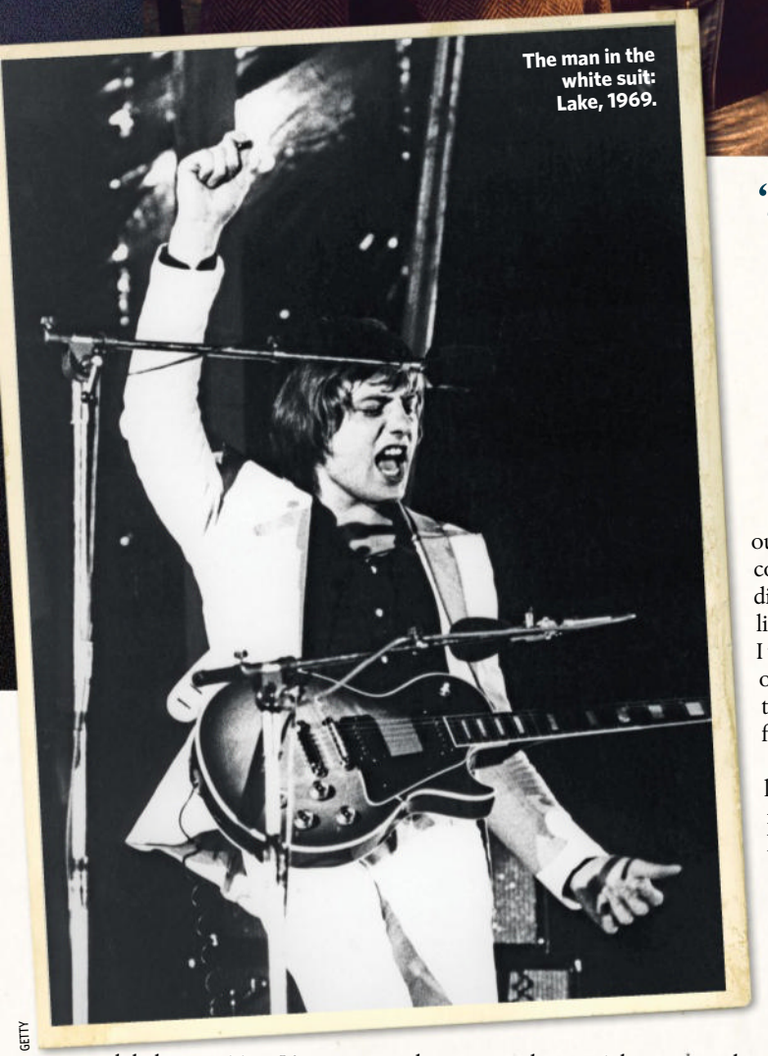
"I remember landing in JFK in New York and we got in to the limo and *Lucky Man* was playing on the radio and they were talking about it being in the charts. And that was the first time we realised that the record had any success at all. It was such a shock because it was our throwaway song. Keith wasn't even going to play on it at first. It wasn't until I'd completed the record, I'd made it all on my own, I did the bass, the harmonies, the guitar and Carl played the drums, that Keith heard the finished version and said, Oh, I should really be on this otherwise if we play it on stage any time I won't be on it. So he went and put his part on it and that's when the now famous Moog solo went on there. It was just a very freaky thing."

Things happened fast in ELP and on a grandiose level too – no wonder some people found them hard to stomach. Though their first official show was at the Isle of Wight festival, they preceded it with a warm-up show at Plymouth Guildhall – Lake estimates it was the night before the Isle of Wight, Emerson that there was a week between the shows. The amount of days didn't matter; it was the expectation that was extraordinary.

"That was because I'd come from King Crimson and Keith from The Nice. We were all well-known in one way or another," says Lake, "Some people had seen the Plymouth show and been talking it up, so it was a great start for what was our first official gig. It was a wonderful moment for us because it was sort of

ALAN MESSER/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Emerson was the clear winner in the 'wearing your manliest jacket' competition: ELP, 1975.



The man in the white suit: Lake, 1969.

GETTY

global recognition. It's pretty rare that you can do one night and in that one show you become world famous, but that's what happened.

"It had its drawbacks though. It was the first time the word supergroup was used, and in a way that wasn't such a good thing, because suddenly it was if we had been given it all on a gilded plate and in truth we'd all paid our dues. We'd all slept in the backs of vans and roughed it for years and it didn't come easy. But in that instance it looked as if we'd been gifted it. That caused a lot of resentment in certain quarters."

Carl Palmer describes you and Keith as the band's bookends and you speak almost fondly of each other now. Was your relationship as fragmented as history's made out?

"It's strange because Keith and I know each other inside out. There's a special relationship that is very comfortable." says Lake, "And nearly all the disagreements in ELP were musical. People would like to think it was all personal, but very little of it was. I tell you what, any band that doesn't argue isn't much of a band. It's because people who care about what they're doing, who are passionate about it, will fight for their corner.

*"Nearly all disagreements in ELP were musical, not personal. Any band that doesn't argue isn't much of a band."*

*Greg Lake*

"I used to watch Keith with The Nice and I genuinely loved what he did. I really thought he was a great musician. He was a great artist onstage, he lived it; he lived the music. Keith to me was very similar to Hendrix in that sense. You would watch either of those guys and they were on fire. They lived through their instrument. When we got to know each other, we found that we had a lot of music in common. I would like things that he did and vice versa and so that came through in things like *Fanfare*.... They were things we both liked. I found that and then he found *Pictures*... and we both locked on to those songs and that's part of what made them so successful and made them our own."

With such a suitably over-the-top start and a fairly histrionic career, it seems such a shame that it dwindled so towards the end.

"It was such a fleeting 10 years of my life," says Lake almost sadly, "And I did miss playing with Carl and Keith. When I left I was a bit lost and detached, and I think the public didn't want Greg Lake the solo artist so much as they wanted Greg Lake from ELP. I played with lots of people, some fabulous players, but I think I was just searching for a direction all the time. I think I was just born to be part of a band you now, a singer in a band. That's what I am."

And now, happily, he is again.

## THE MAJESTY OF ELP

### The classic rock world pays homage

"There are certain songs that remain a part of your memory banks from youth and *Lucky Man* from ELP's debut is one of them. Although I was only seven at the time of the release, my father played that record over and over."
***Joey Vera, Fate's Warning/Armored Saint***

PAUL BERGEN/GETTY

"When ELP formed, I loved their whole approach – Keith's playing, and the whole cutting-edge nature of the music. If you asked me to name my favourite record, I would probably choose *Tarkus*."
***Rod Argent, The Zombies/Argent***

"I remember as a youngster when some music show on Swedish television showed snippets of various ELP performances, I thought maybe playing keyboards isn't all that wimpy. Keith Emerson's diversity of switching from rockin' Hammond parts to beautiful piano improvs have always been inspiring to me."
***Per Wiberg, Opeth***

# Ask Captain Carl!

Busy in the studio finishing off Asia's Omega album, **Carl Palmer** agreed to answer Prog readers' longest-held ELP questions.

**_Love Beach_ is still cited as an all-time low, critically panned and Carl's 'frisbee' remark is well known. But from side two, *Memoirs Of An Officer And A Gentleman* is a personal favourite and I think it still stands up today. You could argue the song, and band, never get out of second gear, but that's part of the charm and mood of the piece in my humble opinion. So, in retrospect, 30-plus years on, do you collectively or individually have some warmth for any of that album, or still shiver at it?** *(Ross Muir)*

I believe this album was the beginning of the end. Saying that, with my own band I still play *Canario* from that album. It's been a big favourite over the years with my band CPB.

**Has your percussion concerto been performed by a symphony orchestra? It is about time!** *(Jonas Woxtrom)*
It has not been performed. Only the second movement was played by an orchestra many years ago. I believe it was [Scottish virtuoso percussionist] Dame Evelyn Glennie.

**What were the main influences for a piece like *Tarkus*?** *(Ilai Ashdot)*
Originally I had an 10/8 riff that I played to Keith and that is what the main theme started off with and it was developed from there.

**Which current prog rock bands do you think are – musically – the natural successors to the ELP legacy or the closest to it?** *(Alison Henderson)*
There is not one that comes to mind. ELP was a one-off, keyboard-driven – this made a big difference at the time and still does. Guitar players have advanced so much more than keyboard players over the years. So at the moment I don't see anything musically that comes close to ELP.

**I was wondering when the band could ever step up to the plate and create something as good as *Tarkus* or *Brain Salad Surgery*? With progressive rock at an all-time high, why don't the originators do something edgy and OTT and quit with the sappy songs?** *(Paul Sager)*
We are OTT and will remain that way, thank you very much… Sappy songs, as you put it, never hurt The Beatles – they were prog as well, I believe.

**Will you play any warm-up shows in the UK with Asia before the band head off to Europe and Japan.** *(Gazzagary)*
No, sorry – just at the High Voltage Festival.

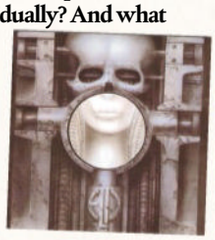
**After the orchestra left the 1977 *Works* tour in Des Moines, you travelled to Fort Wayne, Indiana for a few days to relearn the material as a threesome. What are your recollections of those rehearsals and just how hard was it to perform *Pirates* with no orchestra?** *(Linda Heath)*
It was all very easy, no problem whatsoever. I like going back to the three of us, which was the original concept. I have had a trio ever since with my own group.

**BTW: losing *Closer To Believing* from the setlist was the worse thing to me about losing the orchestra.** *(Linda Heath)*
Okay!

**ELP: What has prompted the reunion at this time? Why is it only for a one-off show? Why not a longer tour and album?** *(John Coulson)*
There are no plans for any more concerts. The 40th anniversary is a good reason to play though, don't you think?

**What happens if you find yourselves caught short onstage during the longer pieces? Ever had an accident?** *(Stoolie)*
Fuck off, you big stool!

**What compositions are you most proud of either collectively or individually? And what songs did you most enjoy performing live?** *(Christine Bodi)*



Well, I am proud of my time with ELP and all of the period from 1971 to 1978 was a great learning curve. I think *Brain Salad Surgery* is the album where ELP was at the top end of its creativity.

**What classical piece would you like to give an ELP re-vamp?** *(Andrew)*
I will have to come back to you on that.

**Will there be more Deluxe Editions in the works including: *Tarkus*, *Trilogy* and the self-titled debut?** *(Zachary Nathanson)*
I have not been told of any!

**How about a performance of (my favourite) the complete *Trilogy*?** *(Rick Kratz)*
Keep on the dreaming! But sorry – I play the main theme *Trilogy*. That's as close as any of us get at the moment and that's with my own CPB band.

"I asked for Kettle chips for my rider, not drums!": The Cow Palace, San Francisco, 1977.

**Would you do a run of shows playing *Tarkus* from beginning to end?** *(Marcelo Rodriguez)*
Oh yes!

**Why, with your various musical backgrounds, did you settle on the musical style that originally brought you together, then digress further until it became more "pop" than "prog"?** *(Kittiewake)*
I'm not really sure. Things just develop as a band grows together.

**Any chance of hearing *Karn Evil 9* in its entirety at High Voltage? It may be your last shot at doing it again!** *(Blokeski)*
No, but I can tell you that you will be very happy with what you will hear!

**Please play *Toccata* at the High Voltage Festival. You play this tune with your band and it's just brilliant.** *(Gazzagary)*
I have suggested this piece of music many, many times. We did play it once many years ago as ELP. But I am very sorry, this is not on the list although I will carry on playing this in the future – as you have pointed out – with CPB.

RICHARD MCCAFFREY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Where the wild thing was: Carl Palmer.

*"Of the current prog rock bands, I don't see anything musically that comes close to ELP."*
*Carl Palmer*

PETER MAZEL/SUNSHINE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Snooker's Steve Davis japes about with Pye and Geoffrey.

Caravan: our favourite kind of holiday.

Putting two members of etherial Canterbury scenesters **Caravan** into a room with interesting snookerist **Steve Davis** turned out to be an unexpected laugh riot. **Malcolm Dome** takes notes.

# THE SHOW OF THEIR LIVES

10 Years Of PROG 2011

ALL PICTURES: PRESS

**"Caravan were always floaty and disorganised. That's what we were meant to be."**
**Geoffrey Richardson**

Laughter. That's the soundtrack to this meeting of a sporting great and a prog legend. The very idea that Steve Davis and Caravan would be anything other than sedate is utterly ludicrous. How is it possible that the snooker champion with a reputation for being boring, and the Canterbury band who've always been low key could be anything other than dull together? You should have been there…

The fact is that massive Caravan fan Davis interviewing Pye Hastings and Geoffrey Richardson ended up being hugely entertaining. Just 10 minutes into this relaxed chat, an alarm goes off in the building, prompting Davis to tell everyone: "If that's the fire alarm, then I'm not moving until I've finished my coffee. It cost me good money!"

The alarm carried on sounding throughout much of what followed. So much so that when it stopped, we all felt that something precious had been taken away. It also prompted Davis to ask about how years of playing had affected the Caravan pair's hearing, which we'll come to a little later. So, to appreciate what's about to follow, you have to bear in mind that, despite what most people would have expected, this was a thoroughly enjoyable hour. Oh, and the giggles flowed like a torrent of water gushing out of a burst pipe. So stand by for tales of food poisoning in Birmingham, the Formula 1 legend who wants to play with Caravan and a pissed band nearly messing up studio equipment…

**DAVIS:** I know it's the 40th anniversary of the album In *The Land Of Grey And Pink*, but can I admit that my favourite Caravan album is *For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night*.

**HASTINGS:** You're a friend now for life!

**DAVIS:** If I ever want to introduce someone to the kind of strange music that I favour, then this would be how I'd start. Whenever I play it in the car, my foot immediately pumps the accelerator pedal harder.

**RICHARDSON:** It was not only my first album with Caravan, but my first experience of being in a studio.

**HASTINGS:** It was a bit of a departure for us. We had a bassist [Richard Sinclair] who wanted to take us in a more jazz oriented direction. He'd left by the time we did *For Girls*… and I took the chance to guide the band into a more rock style. So a lot changed. We actually recorded the album, then went out and toured, and when we came back we re-recorded it. In fact, second time around we did the whole thing in one take.

**RICHARDSON:** I remember we did the original recordings at Blue Horizon Studios in Chipping Norton. It was the first time I'd ever been in a studio, and two things struck me. One was being amazed at all the equipment, and the second was not quite believing how much this band could drink!

**DAVIS:** We're two years off the 40th anniversary of that album. Are there any recordings around which never made it onto the original that might surface on a reissue?

**HASTINGS:** There are all the original recordings we did. The second time we did the album, it was at Decca Studios in London, and they could still have the first tapes there. I do remember one time at Blue Horizon, when all the engineers were upstairs eating. We were all a bit pissed, and thought it would be fun to try and mix the tapes ourselves. What a mess! We got the equipment started, and the whole tape just flew off – whoosh! All over the studio floor. Thousands of pounds just lying there. We frantically tried to get it all back together before anyone found out what we'd done.

Actually, that reminds me of something. Richard Sinclair told me that he met you, Steve, a while back, and when he found out you were a Caravan fan, he asked you what your favourite album was. You told him that it was *For Girls*… and he was disappointed. Because he's not on it. When he told me, I just thought: 'Yes. That's one in the eye for you, Richard!'. He and I always had a rivalry.

**DAVIS:** I don't remember that at all. But then my memory's really bad. In the snooker world, people always ask what I recall about the ◆▸

1985 World Championship final with Dennis Taylor, the one where it went down to the black on the last frame. I have no recollections of it at all. Come on, it was 26 years ago. A lot's happened since.

**RICHARDSON:** I've met three people who played at Woodstock, and they don't remember even being there! It's been said that if you remember Woodstock then you couldn't have been there.

**DAVIS:** What sort of music were you listening to in the early 70s?

**RICHARDSON:** Oh, the likes of Steely Dan, Mahavishnu Orchestra, Frank Zappa and The Beatles.

**DAVIS:** Do you listen to young bands these days?

**HASTINGS:** I'm a magpie, and listen to everything. And it all impacts on what I write…

**RICHARDSON:** I have to mention a really good young band from Canterbury called Syd Arthur. They're quirky, but definitely in the Canterbury tradition. A couple of years ago, I was at the Lounge In The Farm Festival in Canterbury, which the Syd Athurs always organise. I had my viola with me, and Radio Kent asked if I'd do *A Hunting We Shall Go* live on air. I didn't feel that would work just with a viola, so I asked this bunch of young musicians hanging around if any of them knew some Caravan songs. The band were Syd Arthur. Raven Bush (who's Kate Bush's nephew) had his mandolin with him, and said he knew loads of Caravan songs, so we duetted on the spot. And it was brilliant.

**DAVIS:** If Caravan fans asked you to recreate the sound you had back then, could you do it formulaically?

**HASTINGS:** If it was an interesting project, then we could do it. But I think it would be a mistake. Once you've done something and it worked, then it's time to move on. A band should lead the fans, not the reverse. Otherwise you end up going round and round in circles.

**DAVIS:** On a similar note, you must always face the problem of trying to introduce new songs into your live set, when fans want the old favourites. I don't have a similar problem in snooker, as you never repeat anything, but how will you deal with this for the High Voltage set?

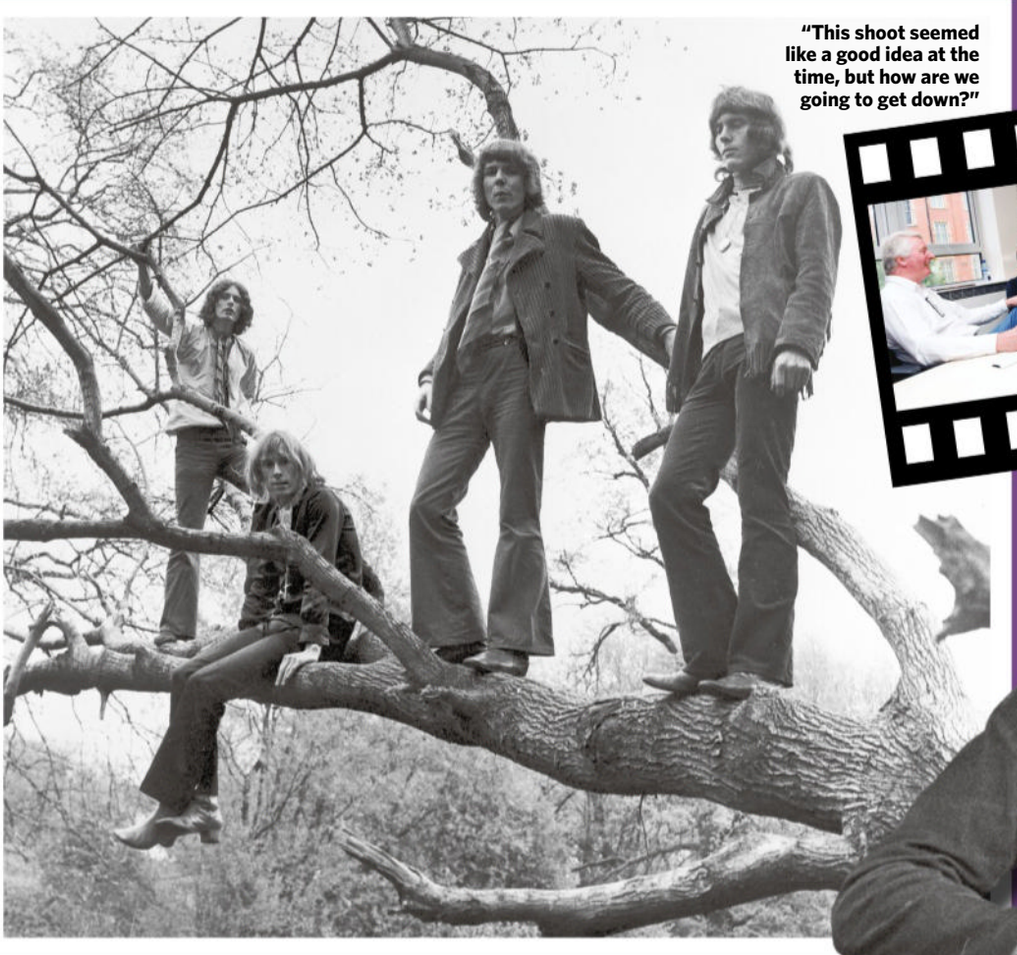
**HASTINGS:** We find that if you have favourites at the start and end, then in the middle fans will allow you to fuck around and try out new songs. So, that's what we'll do.

**DAVIS:** I think you'll really enjoy High Voltage. I went last year and there was great crowd at the *Prog* stage. It was really mixed as well. A lot of young people, which was great to see.

**RICHARDSON:** We did a show in Tel Aviv recently, and there were loads of kids in the audience. They had all our CDs and knew the words to every song. It was astonishing.

**DAVIS:** Yes, there seems to be a new generation getting into your music. You've given pleasure to millions of people over the years, and it carries on.

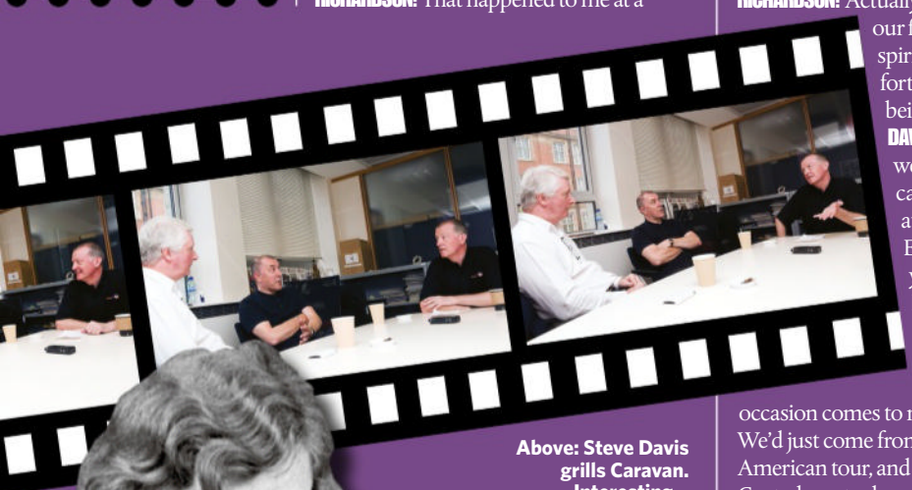
**Don't mock the style – you'll all be wearing it again next season.**

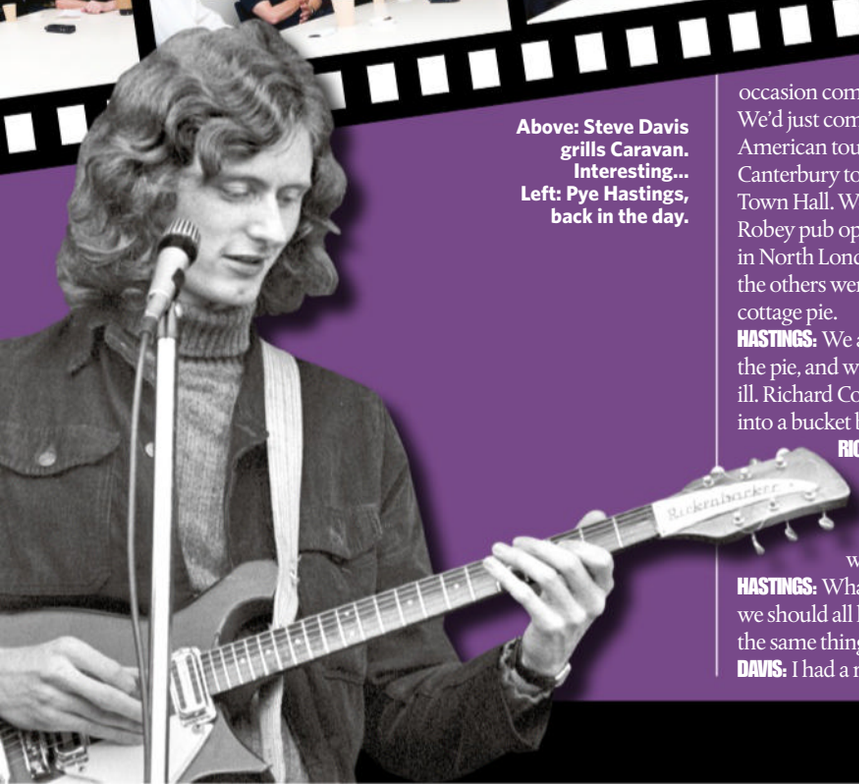


**"This shoot seemed like a good idea at the time, but how are we going to get down?"**

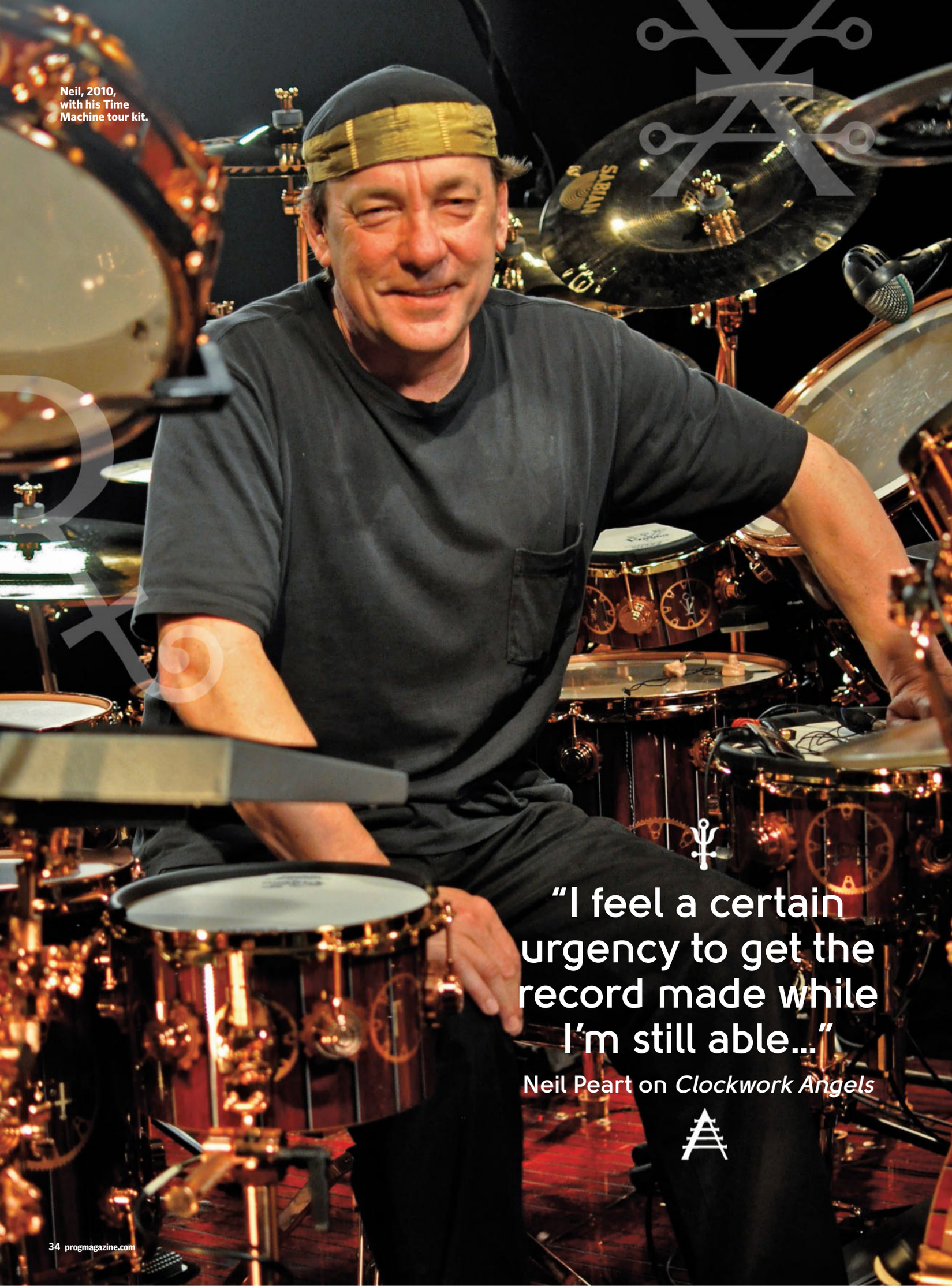
**HASTINGS:** You play an instrument, Steve?
**DAVIS:** Me? No. But my son is a very good pianist.
**HASTINGS:** Well, do you fancy getting up onstage anyway, and playing along with us at High Voltage? You can just stand and look like you're strumming a guitar.
**DAVIS:** Good grief, no. That would be awful. I'd be so scared. Even just standing around onstage. I also think the real anoraks in the crowd would be unimpressed and probably walk off.
**RICHARDSON:** Actually, we do have one famous fan who does play. Eddie Jordan, who's heavily involved in Formula 1, of course. Our booking agent knows him really well. He called me one day and said, 'I've got your new drummer. Eddie Jordan. He's an excellent drummer. Knows all your songs and is ready to go'.
**HASTINGS:** How about introducing us onstage a High Voltage, Steve?
**DAVIS:** That I could do, although what I'd say… who knows?
**RICHARDSON:** Maybe you could come in with a snooker cue! Actually we've had a few interesting people introduce us over the years…
**HASTING:** The oddest was Judge Dread, who was a big reggae star in the 70s. He asked if he could introduce us at the Fairfield Halls in Croydon!
**DAVIS:** Talking of odd, have there ever been occasions when you've been somewhere like a cafe, and heard one of your songs?
**RICHARDSON:** That happened to me at a supermarket in France not so long ago. They started playing a song from the Algerian singer Rachid Taha, who's big out there, I said to my girlfriend: 'I did all the string arrangements on this'. She wasn't at all impressed, and told me to get the shopping list out!
**DAVIS:** You've always been a working musician, Geoffrey. But you gave up for a while, didn't you Pye? What happened?
**HASTINGS:** In 1980 we got hit with tax and VAT bills that our former manager hadn't paid. I was so skint that I couldn't pay up. So I got a job as a labourer with a construction company. A few months later they moved me into the office. And then I began my own plant hire company called Molequip. We dealt with giant mechanical moles for tunnelling. Then one day, I picked a guitar again, and realised that I wanted to play.
**DAVIS:** Did anyone recognise you while you away from the band?
**HASTINGS:** A guy working with one of these moles in a hole asked me my name. It took 20 minutes to get him to understand that Pye was my name, and he said: 'What sort fucking name is that?'. He then asked me what I done in the past. So I told him I'd been in a band called Caravan and he said: 'Never heard of them!'. But you need that sort of comedown sometimes to keep your ego in check.
**DAVIS:** You've never been mainstream…
**HASTINGS:** I'd like to have been mainstream.
**RICHARDSON:** Actually, I think it's worked in our favour. Because our spirit comes from the fortitude we've had from being alternative.
**DAVIS:** This might sound weird, but in snooker you can go for a toilet break at the end of each frame. Even in the middle if you're caught short. Have you ever had a problem like that onstage?
**RICHARDSON:** One occasion comes to mind. It was years ago. We'd just come from a successful American tour, and had to drive up from Canterbury to do a show at Birmingham Town Hall. We stopped off at the George Robey pub opposite the Rainbow Theatre in North London. I stayed in the van, but the others went in to have a pint and some cottage pie.
**HASTINGS:** We all got food poisoning from the pie, and went onstage feeling really ill. Richard Coughlan, was throwing up into a bucket by his drumkit.
**RICHARDSON:** A couple of songs into the set I had to tell the sold out crowd that we couldn't carry on, because I was the only one still okay.
**HASTINGS:** What we learnt that day was that we should all have different meals, to avoid the same thing happening again!
**DAVIS:** I had a reputation for being boring, and one thing I thought about was trying to make myself more mysterious by wearing a wrestler's mask, and not doing interviews. I wondered if you could do it all again, what would you do differently and who would you do it over?
**HASTINGS:** The song *If I Could Do It All Over Again, I'd Do It All Over You* actually has two meanings. The obvious one, and 'over you' can also mean 'because of you'. The beauty of our language…
**RICHARDSON:** I'd like to have had an older head on young shoulders. The money we got through and the money we never saw is ridiculous. But without what we went through some of the songs Pye wrote about specific incidents and people would never have happened.

Caravan were always floaty and disorganised. That's what we were meant to be. We had a bassist at one time called John Perry, who was very together and always walked around with a briefcase. He used to wind people up terribly due to his business sense. Well, he's now doing well in corporate finance. But it was always written that Caravan should be victims of bad business decisions.
**DAVIS:** One year when the draw for the first round of the World Championship was live on TV, I was there with Ray Reardon, another old champion. And there was a young guy who'd qualified the previous evening. He got Jimmy White or Stephen Hendry in the first round, someone very good, and said he was gonna turn up in a limo wearing a sparkly waistcoat. I told him that the pressure he'd be under was so intense that he should be low key. He agreed, yet still came in a limo wearing a waistcoat made out of mirrors. He got slaughtered. My point is that he was young enough to simply ignore any advice. Do you think you'd have listened to older and wiser people in the 1970s?
**HASTINGS:** No way. You never do, because it's like taking advice from your dad. My wife would regularly tell me that this deal or that deal was wrong, and I'd ignore her. You know what? She was right every time. I have to hold my hands up and say sorry.
**DAVIS:** Have you gone deaf through playing live for so long?
**HASTINGS:** Pardon? Ha, ha. My hearing has deteriorated, but more due to age than anything else.
**RICHARDSON:** I had a hearing test very recently and my ears are fine.
**DAVIS:** Is it loud onstage?
**HASTINGS:** Actually, you're hearing music through amps which are about 100 watts each. The PA system blasting out to the fans can be up to 35,000 watts, so the audience should be more deaf than the band.
**DAVIS:** What does the future hold for Caravan?
**HASTINGS:** A lot more touring, I really love doing that.
**DAVIS:** Fuelled by Sanatogen?
**RICHARDSON:** Nah. By fine wine...
**HASTINGS:** And tea.





**Above: Steve Davis grills Caravan. Interesting... Left: Pye Hastings, back in the day.**




Neil, 2010, with his Time Machine tour kit.

"I feel a certain urgency to get the record made while I'm still able..."

Neil Peart on *Clockwork Angels*

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# THE BEAT GOES ON

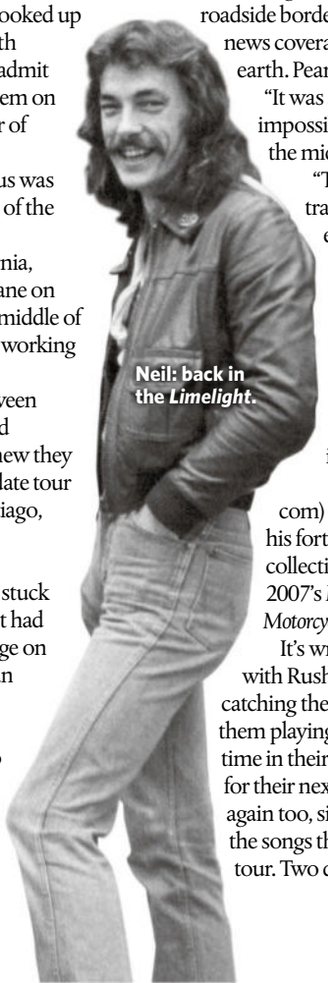
Motorcycling, new fatherhood and film stardom. How does **Neil Peart** fit it all in *and* play in Rush too? In his first rock magazine interview in five years, Peart gives **Philip Wilding** his view from the drum stool on the mammoth Time Machine tour and the future of the band...

There was a moment when Neil Peart and his fellow motorcycle rider Brutus looked up in to the starry dome of the South American night sky and had to admit it; they were lost. Miles above them on the plane ferrying the remainder of Rush and their crew to the first leg of their South American Time Machine tour, the general consensus was that GPS tracking wasn't quite working in the wilds of the Brazilian countryside as they thought it might.

Peart takes up the story from his home in California, "My security guy, Michael, could see us from the plane on the tracking screen intermittently appearing in the middle of a river, so I think he was really hoping that it wasn't working or we were literally sunk."

Down on the ground, Brutus and Neil, who between them had ridden through China, Europe, Africa and Latin America, weren't unduly worried, but they knew they were profoundly off-course – plus they had a four-date tour to consider. The final show was to be played in Santiago, Chile at the Estadio Nacional on October 17.

However, at that time, the people of Chile had something else on their mind; the fate of 33 miners stuck miles underground after a disasterous cave-in. Peart had hopes of his own; one of them was making it onstage on time. He and Brutus got to the Argentinian/Brazilian border and waited and waited, the mountains were jagged blue and black silhouettes in the distance, a customs agent motioned Peart and Brutus over to his computer screen. Fearing the worst about their visa paperwork, instead, they all sat entranced as images of rescue workers flickered into floodlit life, preparing to free the miners from their tomb.



Neil: back in the *Limelight*.

The next night, and now back on course, in an equally remote roadside border post the two of them sat and watched further news coverage as the miners emerged unscathed from the dark earth. Peart sat down and cried.

"It was such a beautiful story. How joyful it was, it was impossible not to be moved, especially because we were in the middle of it all," he says.

"The world is usually unified by events like 9/11, real tragedies, and then there was this joy that brought everyone together. By the time Ged, Alex and I had arrived in Santiago, we decided we wanted to be a part of that joy, to celebrate."

The night of the Estadio Nacional show the band dedicated the aptly titled *Stick It Out* to the 33 miners, Lifeson displaying the number 33 on his guitar as Rush played beneath projected images of the men moving into the light, the cheering crowd in the background, and the world looking on.

Peart wrote about it on his website (www.neilpeart.com) and has added it to the compendium of stories in his forthcoming book, *Far And Away: A Prize Every Time*, a collection of photographs and essays collated since his 2007's *Roadshow: Landscape With Drums, A Concert By Motorcycle* that charted Rush's R30 tour.

It's writing and riding that keeps Peart busy when not with Rush - although extremely busy they are with *Prog* catching them on their extensive Time Machine tour that sees them playing the *Moving Pictures* album in its entirety for the first time in their careers as well as writing and recording material for their next album, *Clockwork Angels*. Peart's become a dad again too, sitting at home the last few weeks playing along to the songs the band are going to perform on the next leg of the tour. Two days after we talk, he's getting on a plane to Toronto

Go for it! Neil in 1978.

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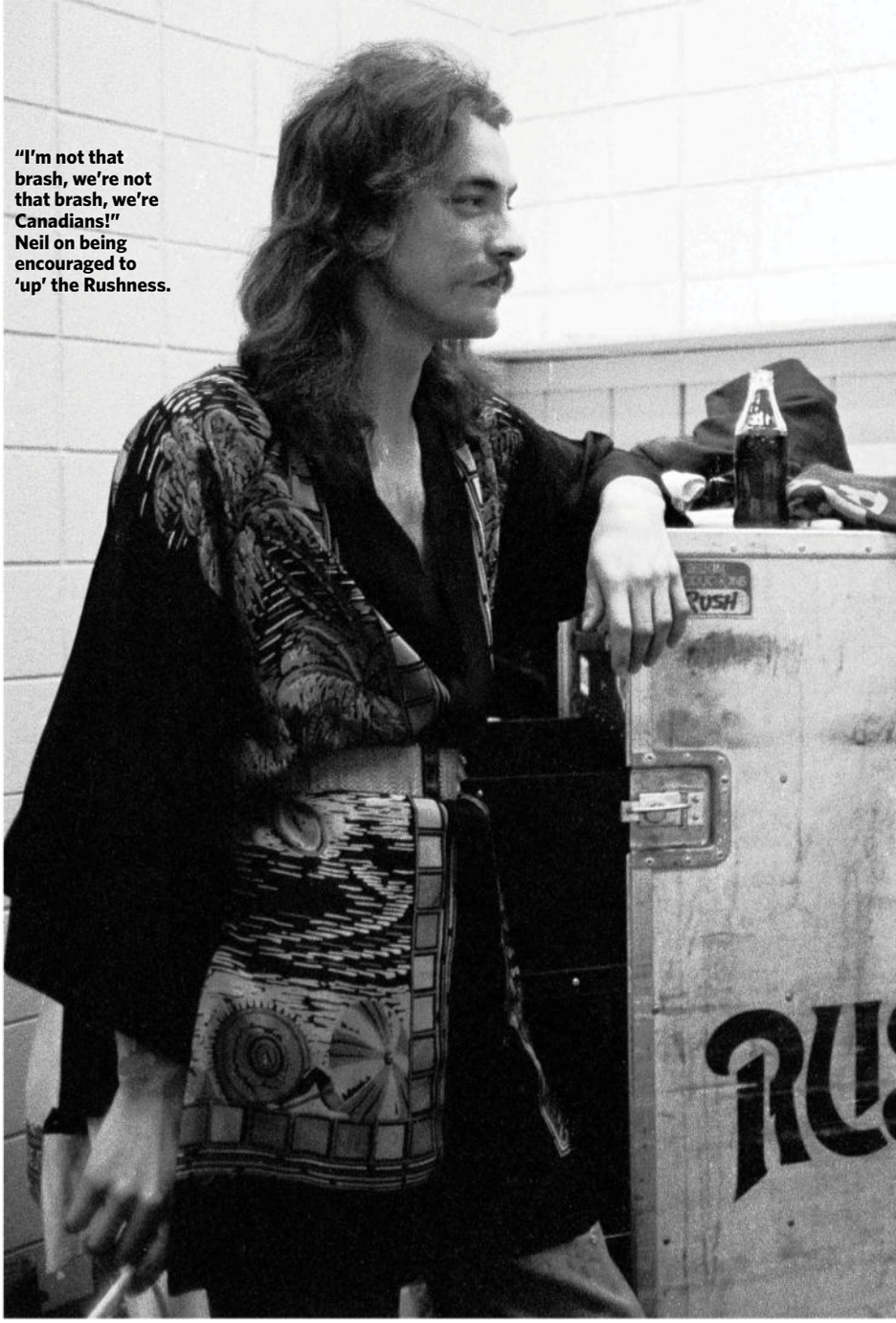


**"I'm not that brash, we're not that brash, we're Canadians!" Neil on being encouraged to 'up' the Rushness.**

to rehearse with Ged and Alex. He will, he says, be going back to the day job. Once the tour ends late summer, they'll think about finishing their 19th album, working once again with Nick Raskulinecz, who helped produce their *Snakes & Arrows* album. Peart reckons that five songs are pretty much done.

"I feel a certain urgency, I really want to get that record made while I'm still able to," he says. "It was hard for me to set the album aside to tour, this really means a lot to me, I intend it to be my highest achievement lyrically and drumming wise, so I really want to get it done while we still can.

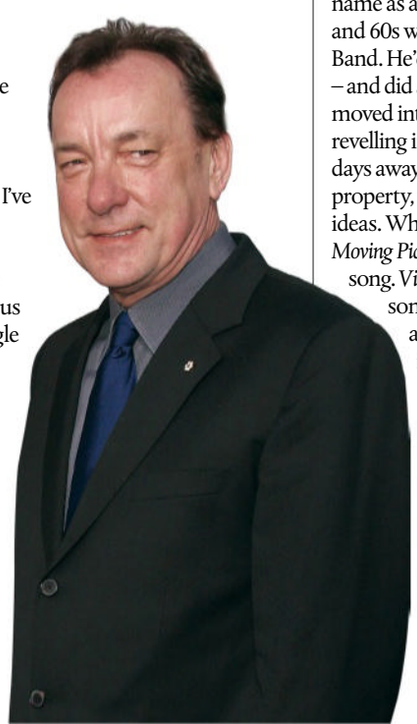
"Nick is a very bad influence," Peart continues. "He wants us to be more Rush than we are, it's wonderful, he pushes me in ways I wouldn't dare. In the middle of *Caravan* there's a ridiculous fill and it was Nick who wanted me to go all the way down the toms and back up again and once I'd done it, my comment was, 'I'm so ashamed!'," he laughs. "He was in the studio outlining his idea to me, and Geddy's sitting down next to us and he looks up over his glasses and says, 'Oh, he wants to make you famous'. I would have never have proposed some of Nick's arrangement ideas to my bandmates, I'm not that brash, we're not that brash… we're Canadians."

Peart's sense of urgency carries over to this latest tour too. In the last five years they've played more shows than they managed in the previous 10. They are, by their own admission, probably playing better live than they ever have done; Geddy said as much when he was in the UK promoting the band's film, *Beyond The Lighted Stage,* in November last year. The sense of wellbeing and the encroaching years have combined to propel the band to new heights that are as much necessity as they are the results of all the hard work they've put in live on the Time Machine tour.

"It's probably that compulsion, you know, the feeling good about it," says Peart. "Still having an audience and feeling that we can perform at a higher level than ever before and knowing that that is a limited offer, we feel like we can't postpone things for two, three or four years anymore, so we must do this now.

"I think of the lyric in *Dreamline, 'We're only immortal for a limited time'*. We've evolved over the years to become a touring machine and we now have the opportunity and the ability to do it, which is fantastic. As young kids, we just wanted to play; then the unexpected thing is that touring makes you better. We've been doing that for 45 years and know that can't last forever, we're not young anymore. But I've survived 58 years!"

**"I've survived 58 years!" Neil ponders immortality.**



It's been 30 years since they made *Moving Pictures,* they weren't young men even then, they had families, they were already a musical force to be reckoned with. In their previous album, 1980's *Permanent Waves,* they'd even scored a hit single in *The Spirit Of Radio*. Peart thinks the leap between albums might have been the most profound they've ever made as a band.

"You can see our evolution in one album's distance. *Permanent Waves* is a whole other thing, a hold-over from the 70s, extended arrangements and peripheries, a certain tweeness to it sometimes, we were still learning, finding our way. Then with *Moving Pictures,* we were doing it. *Permanent Waves* absolutely led to *Moving Pictures,* but if it had been our first album then I'd have been very happy – I sometimes wish it was."

In preparation for *Moving Pictures,* Rush had taken time out to rehearse at US expat Ronnie Hawkins' place. Hawkins had made his name as a respected rockabilly and country session leader in the 50s and 60s who founded The Hawks – later transforming into The Band. He'd made it big in Canada from the off and loved it so much – and did so much for Canadian music – that he stayed. Rush moved into his remote farmhouse in the Canadian countryside revelling in the isolation and time to experiment. Peart spent his days away from the Geddy and Alex in a small cabin on the property, with a 5x8-inch notebook that he'd fill up with lyrics and ideas. Whereas in the past, he'd worked to overall themes, with *Moving Pictures* he compiled separate concepts and ideas for each song. *Vital Signs* came to life last in the studio, quite different sonically and stylistically and done with what Peart refers to as 'a certain amount of bravery' as the album was already in place when they decided to record this one more song that ended up fitting right in.

In an album stuffed with invention and creativity, it's the song *Limelight* that stands out, not only for Alex Lifeson's emotive guitar playing, but Peart's withering take on the downside of fame. It was ironic that a song about the perils of success should make the band even more successful still.

"You've no idea how many authors, athletes and musicians have said to me how much that song

↦

FIN COSTELLO/PRESS

Let there be drums: Neil's current set-up. Wow.

"If it had been our first album I would have been very happy. I sometimes wish it was."

Neil on *Moving Pictures*

PRESS

## MUSO SUPERFAN!

**"He made me want to practice every waking minute of the day!" Biffy Clyro's Ben Johnston on how Neil Peart changed his life.**

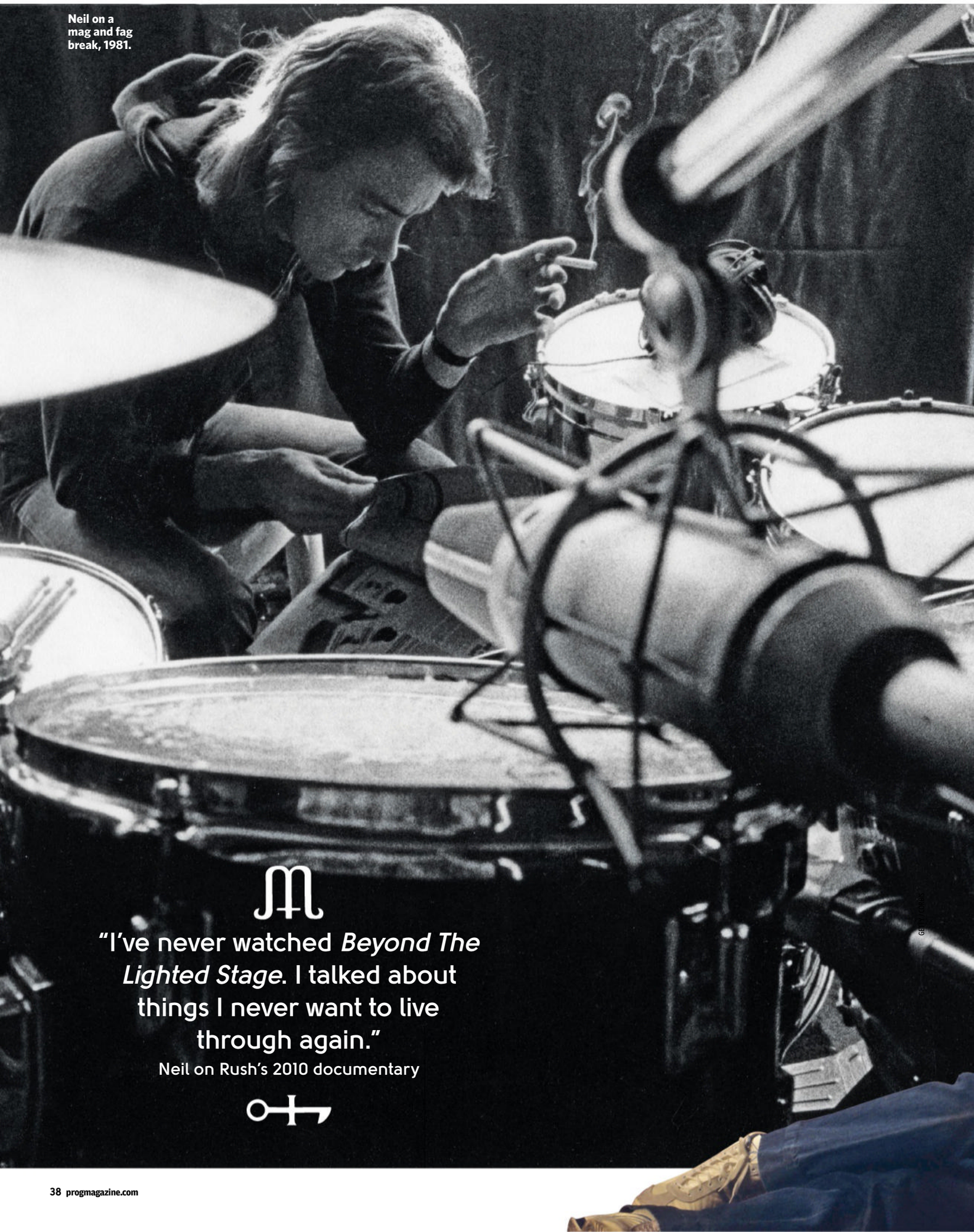
"I WAS IN college when I got introduced to Rush through a friend, so I must have been 18 or 19. I was given a mix tape with Rush and Yes and a bunch of other prog bands and Rush stood out as having songs with great drumming. When I heard Neil Peart it changed my life. I realised it was everything I wanted to do with drums. I just couldn't believe I hadn't heard of them before. Listening to them, they were doing what Biffy were trying to do from the start, trying to fit all these ideas into one song and having a lot of tangents. The singing and lyrics are quite different from what we're about but the musicality of it was very close to what we were trying to achieve. I got that tape and gave it to Simon [Neil, vocals/guitar] and James [Johnston, bass] and we all fell in love with Rush right away. *Jacob's Ladder* is the song for me that's the most Biffy-like and it's my favourite Rush song. It's got tons of odd time signatures, and so have we!

"On their first album, John Rutsey's drumming was John Bonham inspired, fairly to-the-point. But then Neil came in and started to bring in all this stuff, learning jazz and swing techniques, and he put those sensibilities into rock songs. It's not just straight-ahead power-drumming, he's thought it all through. For me that was just a revelation. I just thought 'I want to do that'. I've definitely nicked a couple of chops off him! I'd have to say he made me want to practice every waking minute of the day to become as good as him, because he breathes drums completely and that's why he's amazing. I don't practice nearly enough, but he shows how amazing you can get. He inspired me to do my best to come up with drumming that's really interesting and not just the obvious.

"He's also the main lyricist in the band and that's impressive too, considering he's the drummer. I'm not about to start doing that, I'm no wordsmith.

"Since that day when I was 18 years old I've been dying to see them live and I just haven't had the opportunity. We're a busy band and every time they've been through town I've been away. They've been going for so bloody long I'm terrified they'll split up before I get the chance!

"I couldn't ever work with Neil Peart. I couldn't even talk to the guy! He plays the same cymbals as I do and the people at Sabian offered to arrange a meeting for us, but I instantly turned it down just because the guy is so intimidating. I don't think I'd have anything intellectual enough to talk to him about, I'd just be going 'you're brilliant, I love you!'. He'll always hold a big place in my heart." **EJ**



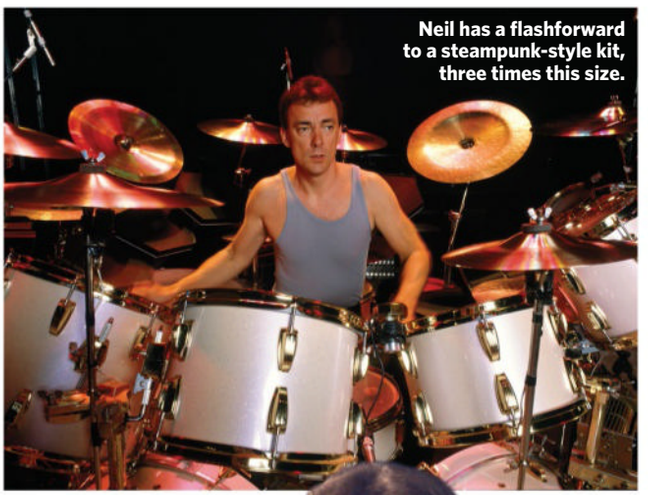
Neil on a mag and fag break, 1981.

"I've never watched *Beyond The Lighted Stage*. I talked about things I never want to live through again."

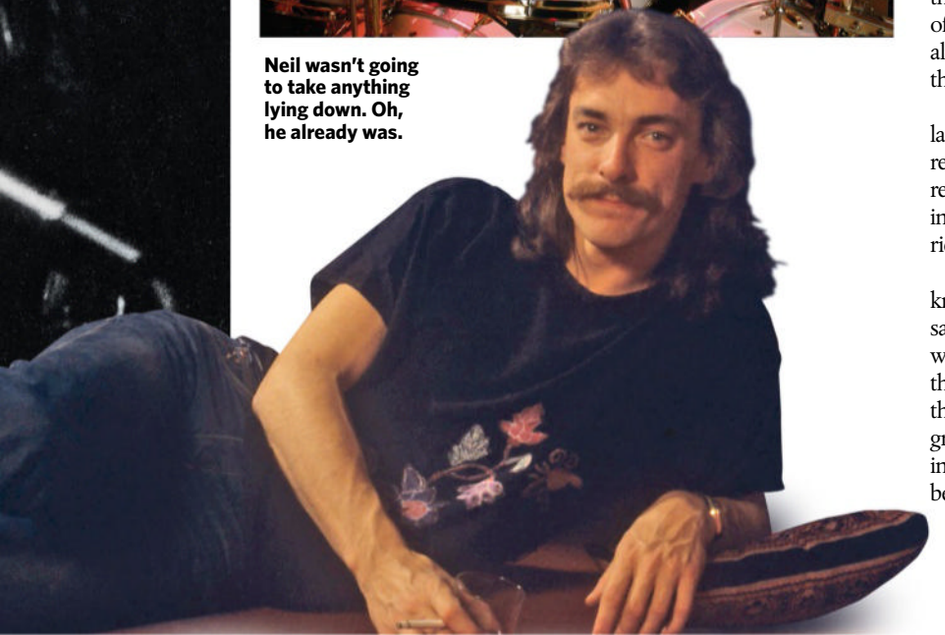
Neil on Rush's 2010 documentary

Neil contemplates where the water feature will go...

The evolution of the touring machine: *Snakes & Arrows* tour, 2007.



Neil has a flashforward to a steampunk-style kit, three times this size.



**Neil wasn't going to take anything lying down. Oh, he already was.**

resonated with them. I was talking to the writer Michael Chabon [*Wonder Boys, The Mysteries Of Pittsburgh*] during the rehearsals for this tour and he was saying that when he does readings and book tours, the line that comes back to him all the time is *'I can't pretend a stranger is a long-awaited friend.'* Suddenly when you get a little bit of fame, boy does that line ever smack you in the face."

Interesting then that in 2010's acclaimed documentary, *Beyond The Lighted Stage*, this most private of bands let the cameras in to film them at work and play. Peart even opened up about the double tragedy that haunts his life; the death of his daughter and first wife in under a year. It was typical Peart, considered and understated, but all the more impactful for his measured delivery. Bad news often screams its name; Peart's was a saddened whisper.

"I've never watched that movie, that's one of the reasons why. I know there are those moments and I don't want to live them again. My mom and dad told me there were moments in the film that were hard and I don't need that, honestly.

"In a similar vein, we had an interview on CNN and it was supposed to be, we thought, a nice light-hearted chat in front of the stage. But even when they've been asked not to, interviewers feel compelled to ask what they think the tough questions are. It's agonising for me, it's horrible. Why do that? I know they want me to break down on camera because it'll make great footage, but it doesn't make me feel very good. I tried to steer them gracefully away from it as best I could, and I gave them a bit of stick about it later too."

On a happier note, the film also contains an extended dinner scene where the band get happily drunk together as Lifeson regales the band with jokes and stories and Peart laughs so hard you fear he'll literally bust a gut.

"To be honest, the other guys wanted to do the film. If anyone had pitched the idea of doing a film about me to me I would have said no thanks," says Peart. "But we didn't have anything to hide and we weren't scared of being filmed – there wasn't going to be a big fist fight or anything. So I just went along. All I did all through that meal was choke and cry, tears rolling down my face, Alex always does that to me, he's famous for that. Geddy and I do say that he's the funniest man in the world."

In the last two years, something else even more extraordinary has happened to Rush, they've become almost hip in America. This is down in no small part to their pivotal place, and cameo, in the movie, *I Love You, Man,* and their invitation to take part in the satirical US TV show, *The Colbert Report*. As well as being interviewed by the host, Stephen Colbert, they tried to play their own *Tom Sawyer* on the *Rock Band* game. They were, without question, awful. By the song's end all you could hear was booing from the virtual TV audience as Geddy shrugged at the camera, "Oh, they hate us."

"I sucked so bad at that game, it was perfect," says Peart. "That game was wrong, though, I was playing the right drum part, it had the wrong one, I swear!"

Thinking about fans having a peep into the real Rush on film still amuses Peart. "If we're just goofing around - and that's the right word, as we're goofs – at that dinner or while playing *Rock Band*, that's not uncomfortable because it's no revelation, it's just the three of us being how we are, so it's a true representation of us getting along and having a good time together. I think that's a beautiful thing to share."

Although Peart talks about their next album as if it might be their last, though he never specifically says that, he just sounds like he's reaching some kind of endgame, he and his bandmates are clearly revelling in the right-now. After 35 years they've actually begun to improvise onstage – Neil and Alex in their solos and Ged on the bass ride out of *Leave That Thing Alone*.

"Geddy will say sometimes, I'll go out to that place, but I don't know how I'm getting back, but you take those kinds of choices," says Neil. "Last summer we were 20 shows in and we went to this whole other place, we'd suddenly evolved again. We've always been the most arranged of all bands and we tend to perform a song, but that's changing after all this time together. There's still room for growth as musicians, I can feel it starting to effect us as a band. That's interesting, the way the three of us do things on our own and it becomes part of the band's fabric.

"That's exciting too, that we're still changing."

***Moving* stairway: Rush in 1981.**

FIN COSTELLO/PRESS. INSET: GETTY

# "OH MY GOD! IT GOES ON FOREVER!"

It was the album where Rush tore up their blueprint and made a dynamic new template for their future career. **Geddy Lee** gets a bit excited with **Dom Lawson** on the revival of ***Moving Pictures*** ...

Originally released in February, 1981, *Moving Pictures* remains one of the most revered rock albums of all time, not to mention the most commercially successful and consistently lauded record that Rush have ever released. Thirty years on, the band are quite understandably celebrating their finest 40 minutes, performing the album in its entirety on their current Time Machine tour and, as is somewhat inevitable these days, re-releasing it in a lavish double-disc "special edition" format, replete with a complete 5.1 Surround Sound remix of the original album.

"Well, these days the record companies are geared to do something and they don't have enough to do," chuckles Geddy Lee. "So we gave them something to do! Ha ha ha! I haven't been involved in it at all. I think Alex [Lifeson, Rush guitarist] got more involved than I have. I know he's really excited about the 5.1 mixes. I think that's the one aspect of the new technology that excites me too. For me, it's the complete opposite of downloading a song as an MP3. I don't care what anyone says, those things sound like crap compared to the original. People say that you can't tell the difference, but you're listening on these stupid little ear buds, so what the fuck? It *does* sound worse. So yeah, 5.1 is the antithesis of all that. The only way to hear it is in a big room with all the right equipment. It's kind of nice to go against the grain like that."

Aside from giving their biggest album a welcome 21st century polish, Rush are clearly enjoying the opportunity to revisit the songs in the live arena too. Beyond the album's unquestionable significance and the anniversary itself, were there any other reasons to make *Moving Pictures* the central focus of the current tour?

"The songs on that record are also the most requested by fans, so if you listen to your own history and you listen to your fans and you decide to do something like that, it seemed logical that *Moving Pictures* was the first album we'd try that with," Lee explains. "We really enjoyed the opportunity of doing something like that. It fits into what we're all about pretty well, you know, the idea of the concept within a concept within a concept! I think it's something we'd definitely do again in the future."

Prog overload.

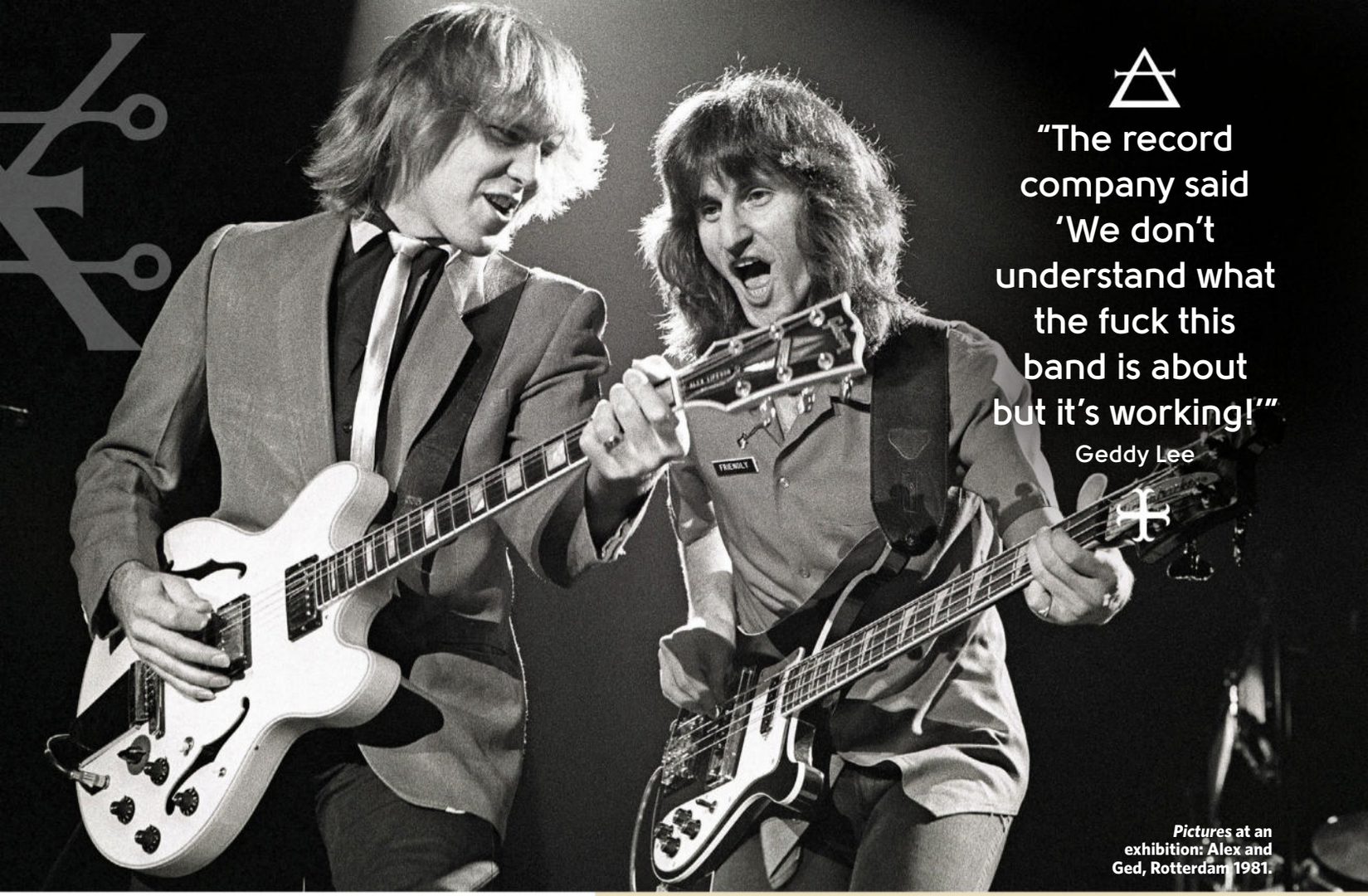
**"We always accepted we had to live in the moment and *Moving Pictures* reflects that."**

**Geddy Lee**

Songs like *Tom Sawyer*, *Red Barchetta* and *YYZ* have, of course, been staples of Rush live sets for the last three decades, and so it is the rebirth of the somewhat less celebrated likes of *The Camera Eye* and *Witch Hunt* that is delighting the die-hards.

"I don't think we would ever have played …*Camera Eye* if we hadn't decided to play the whole record," admits Lee. "We would never have rediscovered the enjoyment of playing a song like that, which we thought we'd never be able to pull off again! I was really gritting my teeth before we set out to learn that song. Alex and I were sat in my studio at home and we were listening to it, saying 'Oh my god, it goes on forever! What the hell were we thinking?' So we very judiciously eliminated a minute and a half of its full 12 minutes.

"But little did we know how difficult it would be to learn a 12-minute song that suddenly became a 10-and-a-half minute song, because the edits were so subtle that they were harder for us to learn. It ➔



"The record company said 'We don't understand what the fuck this band is about but it's working!'"

Geddy Lee

***Pictures* at an exhibition: Alex and Ged, Rotterdam 1981.**

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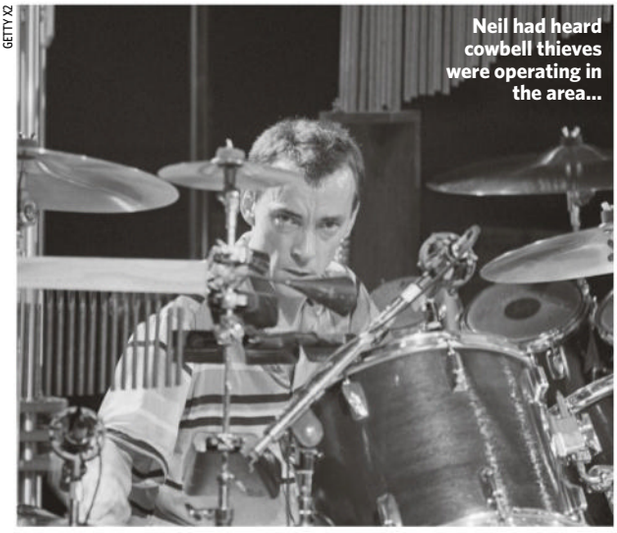


**Neil had heard cowbell thieves were operating in the area...**

ROSS HALFIN

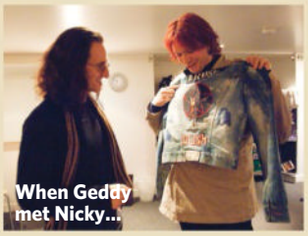
really would have been easier to just play the whole damn thing! Ha ha ha!"

In career terms, *Moving Pictures* marked the end of a grand creative transition for Rush; a bold move from the overtly proggy adventures of the early years to a sharper, smarter sound fit for the more streamlined tastes and trends of the 80s. Clearly the decision to evolve paid off tenfold for the band, and that determination to embrace the new has become a matter of principle ever since.

"The one great thing about this band is that the three of us are stupidly fearless," notes Lee. "We're not *aware* that we're being fearless. We're just stupidly, stubbornly going down the route that we think is the right way to go. After *2112*, we kinda bought our independence. The record company basically said 'Okay, we don't really understand what the fuck this band is all about, so let's leave them alone and hope for the best, because it seems to be working!' We've always accepted that we have to move in the moment and within the flow of our creative juices. Every album reflects that moment and *Moving Pictures* is the perfect example of that."

## "IT'S ONE OF THE GREATEST ALBUMS IN HISTORY!"

### Manic Street Preacher Nicky Wire on the genius of *Moving Pictures*...



**When Geddy met Nicky...**

"My older brother got me into Rush. It was a bit of a rites of passage thing. All the older guys at school seemed to be into them. And they all had the Starman logo on their jackets and stuff. It seemed a bit like a secret society to me. It was pretty inspiring. I think *Fly By Night* was my first album, followed by *2112* and it really took off from there.

"I remember when I first heard *Moving Pictures* it grabbed me right away. I really remember getting heavily into the lyrics. Neil had always been special but with *Moving Pictures* it seemed that he'd taken things on to a whole new level. I really do believe that *Moving Pictures* has some of his greatest lyrics ever. The whole idea of the small man in society being beaten down – things like *Red Barchetta*. It really made an impact with me. And watching Neil explain *Limelight* on the film – which is the best film ever – made it all so much clearer.

"I'll never forget my brother one Bonfire Night. That night was always a massive deal where I came from. It was just the best night of the year with loads going on. Everyone out and fireworks and all sorts of things going on. And yet when it got to seven o'clock on the night in 1981 my brother disappeared. He'd gone inside to watch *Top Of The Pops* because it was the night they were showing the clip of Rush doing *Tom Sawyer* – the promo was them doing it live as well. I was a bit too young to really get the significance at the time.

"But from that first note of *Tom Sawyer* on the album you just know that you were into something special. It's such a pivotal album, the one that seems to connect the old Rush with the way they would become without indulging either side too much. There's strong elements of new wave – you could tell they'd been listening to a lot of The Police and reggae and things. They'd dabbled a bit with reggae before on *The Spirit Of The Radio*, but with something like *Vital Signs* on *Moving Pictures* they were brave enough to indulge it a lot more.

"What you're listening to is one of the greatest albums in history being made by three of the greatest musicians in the world.

"I'll never forget meeting Rush with *Classic Rock* when they played at Wembley last time [2007] and taking my denim jacket with the Starman embroidered on the back along. I wore that denim jacket to so many school discos. I was so nervous meeting them. It was right up there with making the best man's speech at James' [Bradfield, Manics guitarist] wedding. Playing the Millennium Stadium is easy compared with that!" **JE**

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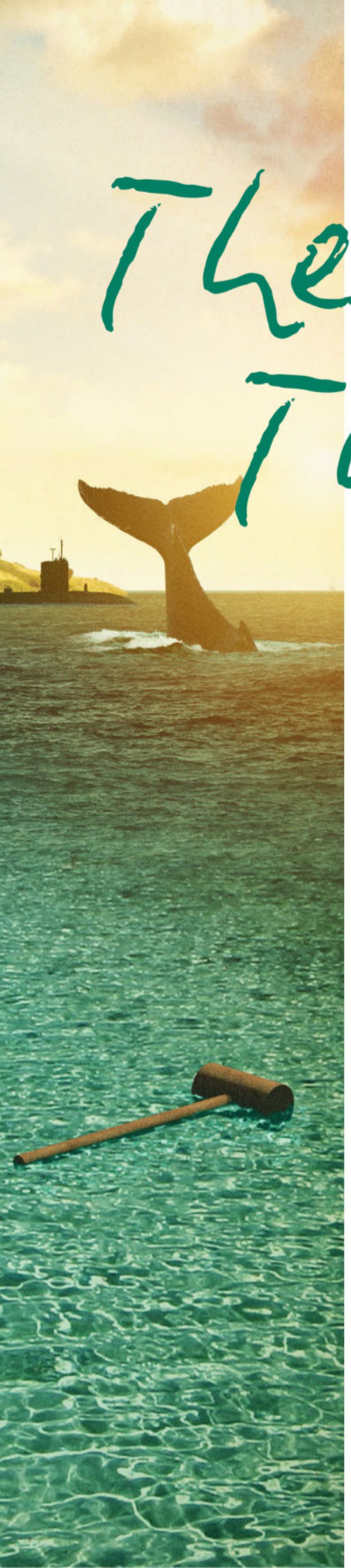


# The Thrill Of The Chase

10 Years Of PROG 2012

October 6, 1972: **Genesis** release their fourth album, ***Foxtrot***, the record that will see their 'theatrical rock' tip over into bombastic costumery, Mellotron-steeped magnificence and the most feted prog suite in history, *Supper's Ready*. **Steve Hackett**, **Mike Rutherford**, **Tony Banks**, **Phil Collins** and **Peter Gabriel** tell how a futuristic prog classic blossomed.

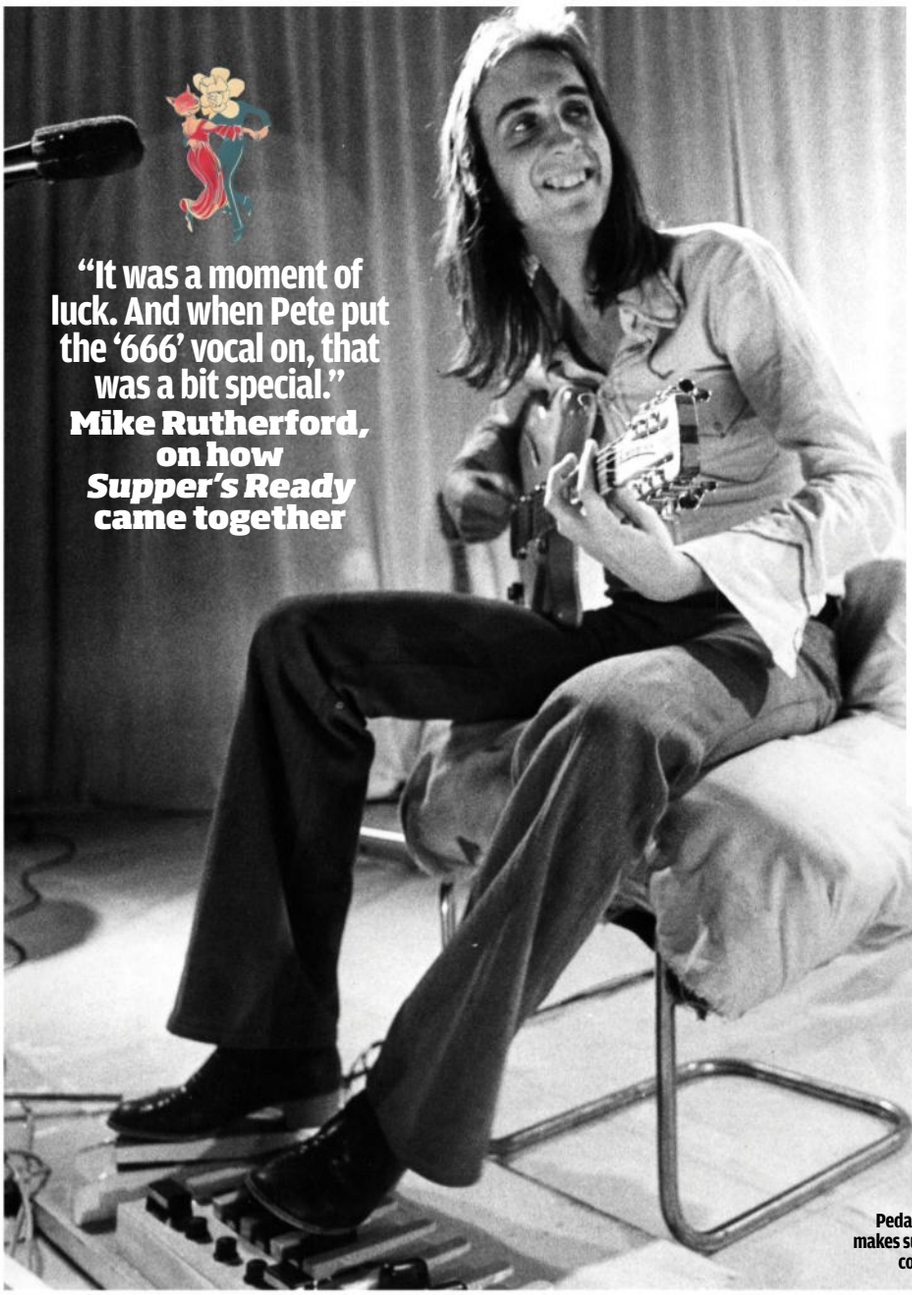
**Leading the hunt:** Chris Roberts **Illustration:** Sam Chivers/Magictorch

The foxtrot – the dance itself, which premiered just under a century ago – is usually defined as a smooth dance of long, continuous, flowing movements. Genesis' *Foxtrot*, which arrived 40 years ago, certainly has its long, continuous flowing movements, and much else besides. Today it sounds as unique, dramatic, thrilling and ambitious as ever. It's where the classic line-up of the band came fully into being; it's when they realised how much they could do, how far they could go. "It was about creating a film for the ear rather than the eye," says Steve Hackett. "And it even got to Number 12 in the charts," Tony Banks laughs. "Of course the next week it went down to Number 27 or something, but it was our first moment of scoring anything, so we felt that we were underway, that we were heading somewhere different. *Foxtrot* was where we first started, in my opinion, to become significant."

While all of its tracks are strong and inventive, *Foxtrot* is unavoidably dominated by the 23-minute seven-part suite which graced what used to be side two. *Supper's Ready* is one of the towering landmarks of prog, dovetailing short surreal pieces with moving neo-classical reprises and recapitulations, serene flows with shuddering staccato, parochial realism with pulchritudinous dreams. Across this fire from the skies, Peter Gabriel sings of battles between good and evil and love and war, of firemen, farmers, flowers (*'a flower?'*), and a frog who was a prince (who was a brick) (which was an egg) (which was a bird). And of 666 and a new Jerusalem. Startling then, it remains a stunning achievement of vision and scale. Roger Taylor of Queen has called it, "at separate times, homely, beautiful, tortured and epic." *'We've got everything,'* it declares presciently. *'We're growing everything...'*

**"We were underway, we were heading somewhere different. *Foxtrot* was where we started to become significant."**
**Tony Banks**

While *Supper's Ready* is the main course, *Foxtrot* should however be appreciated as more than just a set of appetisers leading up to it. It's strange to learn that the album came about in a relatively ramshackle manner: no great master plan had been conceived. The band sought a producer who could capture their improving live sound, and to that end had meetings or sessions with Paul Samwell-Smith,



**"It was a moment of luck. And when Pete put the '666' vocal on, that was a bit special."**
**Mike Rutherford, on how *Supper's Ready* came together**

Pedal power: Mike makes sure he's extra comfy onstage.

Big Band theory: Phil gets rhythm.

Animal magic: Gabriel wears his wife's dress for a brush with androgyny.

John Anthony and Bob Potter. None was quite the right fit so David Hitchcock, whose work with Caravan had impressed, came in, with the more outspoken engineer John Burns.

Steve Hackett was fatigued by the heavy touring schedule and still somewhat intimidated by his fellow band members' prowess ("these guys are so good", he's recalled thinking). In 2012, having just re-recorded *Supper's Ready* and others for his *Genesis Revisited II* album (see the feature following this), he remembers the steps towards *Foxtrot* more fondly. "There weren't a lot of days off; we were a hard-working live band," he says. "Whereas with its predecessor, *Nursery Cryme*, we'd taken the summer off and written and recorded together as a unit, bonding the team, this time we were on the run, in and out of the studio. I remember flying back from Italy to be in there a day or two ahead of the others, who were travelling by road, just to finish off my guitar parts on the end of *Supper's Ready*."

If there's one album that doesn't sound like a rush job, it's *Foxtrot*...!

"Maybe not. But when you've done something, you know what your intention was. The perpetrators will always be looking for improvements. We generally agreed to a man that we recorded *Watcher Of The Skies* too fast. To my ears now it sounds like a young band desperate to get the notes right in a race to the finish. Once we'd been playing it live for a while, we relaxed into it and it sounded bigger. The version that ended up on *Genesis Live* is more in-the-pocket. That rhythm is almost impossible for any band to play perfectly! It's full of pitfalls. Yet there's lots of weird and wonderful stuff; it's a band at its most creatively eccentric."

**"We were not one of those boring bands that went diddly-diddly-diddly on the guitar. We did not do that!"**
**Phil Collins**

Rehearsals (and writing sessions) in a variety of locations may have coloured the album's angles and attitudes. Hackett recounts that *Foxtrot* was worked up in a variety of "drab, functional" places, until they moved (without Gabriel, who added the words later) to the Una Billings School Of Dance in Shepherd's Bush. "There were girls dancing upstairs, learning their tap-dance and what-have-you. And the sound of that, those rhythms, would come down through the ceiling. We were below in

what had been a refectory, so you had a counter here and a gobstopper-dispensing machine there. It was all a bit strange, and the atmosphere influenced our subsequent efforts. Much of *Supper's Ready* was written in the two weeks there. With the tap-dancing upstairs, you couldn't be too serious for long, because you'd hear them: clumpety clump clump. That rhythm would kick in, and we'd have to break into smiles…"

*Watcher Of The Skies* had grown out of Banks "fooling around" with the Mellotron. "We bought one of the ex-King Crimson Mellotrons," he notes, "and Robert Fripp insisted it was the one they'd used on *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. Mind you, he had three, and I'm sure he said that about all of them when he was selling them." Hackett too emphasises the importance of that instrument to the album. "I'd kept hammering on that we should get one, saying it'd make our story-telling abilities so much greater. It meant that the band could function as a time machine, with all these various mythologies. The idea was that all the old instruments were there within the Frankenstein that was the Mellotron. It was like an alien orchestra being beamed to you by satellite. And you need to be able to smell the dust from time to time. It had a… cold warmth. I think it's actually the most influential keyboard instrument in the whole of rock." Banks reckons people had never heard "a big, big sound like that" before. It brought the album in with an impossible-to-ignore surge.

"*Time Table*, *Get 'Em Out By Friday* and *Can-Utility And The Coastliners* don't get as much attention as the others," agrees Hackett, "but they're all part of the journey." Not least because of Gabriel's always busy, multi-voiced lyrics. "Yes, there's important social comment on *Get 'Em Out*…, and the rest is hardly boy-meets-girl, is it? And the sci-fi elements show that mythology doesn't have to be backward looking. *Time Table* has something: there's a magic between the piano and the six-string electric. It chimes. You get that third instrument — not piano, not guitar — where the distinction between them is blurred. The ensemble work welds instruments together, grafts them onto each other like that *Star Trek* mind-meld. It's not so much an album of solos."

"We were not," says Phil Collins, "one of those boring bands that went diddly-diddly-diddly on the guitar. We did not do that!" He also suggests that *Get 'Em Out By Friday* would have made for a great Big Band arrangement. "I was listening to Count Basie and Buddy Rich when we recorded that, but that sort of thing didn't appeal to the Genesis sensibility."

Hackett likes the term "lead chords". "Genesis constructed melodies from chords. On *Can-Utility*… for example you get those syncopated orchestral moments. We'd have that 'swirly-cloudy' feel that was such a part of it, that impressionistic feel where you're not certain what you're listening to. That characterises a lot of *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot*."

Meanwhile Mike Rutherford emphasises the compositional craft. "Which is why I never really got the "prog" tag. Some of the progressive bands were more about musicianship. Even though we did long numbers, they were strongly song-driven. That's the key to longevity."

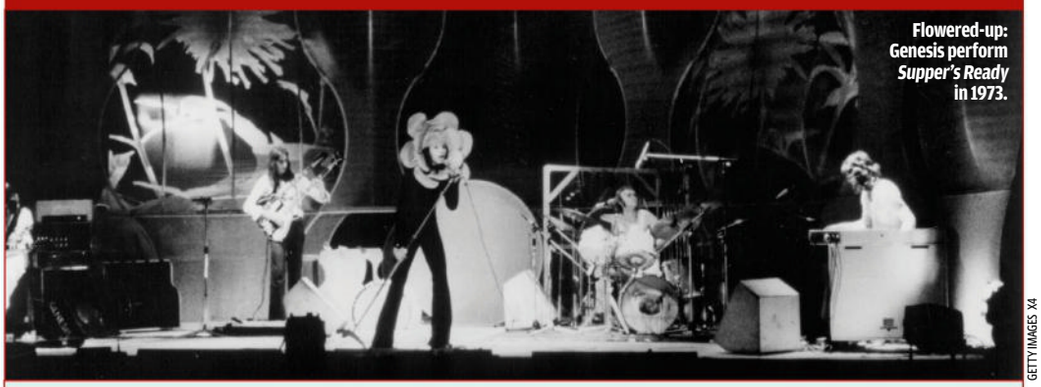
Yet for all the merits of the supporting-cast songs, the march towards *Supper's Ready* always has that Everest on the horizon. Indeed *Horizons*, Hackett's instrumental (influenced by Bach), which precedes it, in his view "works as an hors d'oeuvre, it becomes part of it, an introduction." And then the breathtaking ascent begins.

Peter Gabriel remains proud of it. "It did feel like we captured some emotion there, particularly at the climax," he tells me. "For my part it was influenced by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* — as was *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. It was this idea of a journey. And we were then trying, consciously, to break out of tradition: throwing together different ideas and influences to see if there was a fresh way of putting them all together. I still enjoy it; I'm still attracted to it." In fact Gabriel has considered playing it in recent years, but admits it was rather tough for his band to learn. "There was some resistance. It's not easy! It's still something I wouldn't mind looking at one day…"

**"Days off from touring were few. To my ears now it sounds like a young band desperate to get the notes right in a race to the finish!"**
**Steve Hackett**

## "It's the stuff of symphonies and concertos!"

### The Majesty Of *Supper's Ready*.



Flowered-up: Genesis perform *Supper's Ready* in 1973.

GETTY IMAGES X4

**Steve Hackett:** I can't remember whose idea it was, but we came to the conclusion that you could join any two bits of music together, no matter how disparate the styles, provided the bridge or atmospheric link was strong enough. So we were working on the idea of the musical continuum without naming it as such. And of course that journeying approach - even if it's been much disparaged by some since – it creates for the listener an adventure, an odyssey. Themes reappear. First you might hear them in a bare stripped-back way; then they return with the full Mellotron treatment. With glory! In a sense, the effect when they come back is like when memories become sweeter with time. You've got the stuff of symphonies and concertos.

So there's a nod to the past, but *Supper's Ready* was quite futuristic at that point. Bands just weren't creating pieces of music like that. I think it was then the longest piece that any rock band had ever played live. We were echoing the freedom that music (and education) had in the 60s, so you had surrealistic elements, psychedelic elements, experiments, almost obscurantist aspects.

**Tony Banks:** Most of *Apocalypse In 9/8*… I'd got down as keyboard solos, but then Peter started singing over them, because his lyrics required more information to get out. Initially, I have to say, I was pissed off, because he was singing on "my" bit! Then I realised it now had all the excitement we'd been trying to create, especially the '666' section. You have a lot of drama in the chords themselves, then what he did on top just took it to another level. That half-minute or so is our peak.

**Mike Rutherford:** That was a great moment of luck. Sometimes, you don't quite know what you're doing. The end section happened effortlessly, as good music often does. We wrote for a couple of months, but the act of doing that song seemed quite easy. If things take a long time it's a bad sign. When Pete put the '666' vocal on, that was a bit special. I've had that moment twice in Genesis' history, where the game gets raised by a voice going on a strong instrumental and it's not how you imagined it at all. (The other time was when Phil put the bit in the middle of *Mama*). Same sort of intensity."

**Tony Banks:** "In the early 70s we were lucky. The Beatles had started to go a bit further, then pulled themselves back. But they'd opened a door. Which was followed up by bands like Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Family. We all thought: we can do what we like now! None of these albums sold that much, but we were building a following. Nowadays, you try giving people a 23-minute song that changes 15 minutes in but you've got to hear the first 14 minutes in order to fully appreciate that 15th minute – it's quite a commitment! Different things for different times." **CR**

## GUARANTEED ETERNAL SANCTUARY

"It's a bit like restoring old furniture," says **ReGenesis' man Nigel Appleton**.

In at least one respect, the renowned Gabriel-era tribute band ReGenesis have the originals licked. The band's classic 1970s line-up played live for five years. ReGenesis are now 18.

What's more, they've just finished one of their most ambitious tours to date. *Foxtrot At Forty* saw the quintet perform the whole of the venerable 1972 album as the second half of their set, although as drummer Nigel Appleton points out, most of it has long been a live staple.

"There's only one song on that album we'd never played before, which is *Time Table*," he says. "I don't think there's any record of Genesis playing that live. It can be a big mission to learn stuff for albums, but on this occasion, all the other songs are regulars.

"*Watcher Of The Skies* has been the first song on so many of our gigs. It's instant atmosphere, it's doom-laden yet sci-fi. I do enjoy playing *Get 'Em Out By Friday*, it's one we seem to be able to pull off especially well."

ReGenesis: In bloom, once again.

Regenesis have the enthusiastic endorsement of Steve Hackett, who even wrote the sleeve notes for their *Live At The Empire* album. "He's been very complimentary, and he always comes along," says keyboard player Doug Melbourne, who agrees that ReGenesis have become the keepers of a particular flame.

"Sometimes I think of it a bit like being classical musicians," he says. "No one has a go at an orchestra for doing a bit of Beethoven. Or it's a bit like restoring old furniture, polishing up these bits that have been rather neglected over the years." **PS**

***Find ReGenesis at: www.regenesis-band.co.uk***

Banks remembers how its disparate aspects came together as a song cycle. "We wanted to go further. We'd all been wanting to push away from regular structures. We'd wonder why you had to go verse-chorus-verse-chorus-etc. It's nice to go somewhere else! You can tell more of a story without that repetition. We started thinking we were writing a follow-up to *The Musical Box*, but then we had this very pretty song, *Willow Farm*, too — and wondered: what if we suddenly went from there into this ugly descending-chords sequence? With all the louder, electric instruments entering. Nobody would be expecting it. Once we were into that, we thought: well, we're here now, let's carry on with that freedom and see where it leads. It turned out better than we thought." With customary English restraint, he adds, "When we put the whole thing together and heard it back for the first time, we went: oh! This is actually pretty good!"

Collins, who can be lukewarm on some material of that Genesis era and doesn't listen to it often, says, "*Supper's Ready* was great. The music and imagery worked strongly together, and then on stage the visuals boosted it too." Hackett backs that up. "It wasn't until we were playing it live, with the visual presentation and Peter's showmanship, that it somehow found favour. We were described as "theatrical rock" long before the term "progressive rock" was used. At first when the album came out, we were sometimes playing this stuff to crowds who were just... indifferent."

So how was the response to *Foxtrot* upon initial release? Were people dazzled, confused, appalled, or exhilarated? Or just indifferent?

"All of those things," muses Hackett. "Don't forget, we weren't The Beatles. Just before they released *Sgt Pepper*, they worried whether they'd gone too far and whether the crowd might give them the thumbs-down. We felt in a similar position. It was early days for the band. We just weren't sure. We'd really gone out on a limb with *Supper's Ready*, it was labyrinthine with layers, and it was by no means certain that the response would be positive."

Of course Paul Whitehead's surrealist sleeve design is as much a part of the *Foxtrot* "immersion" experience as that pyramid-prism is to *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. Gabriel certainly dived in, courageously donning his wife's red dress and a fox-head for stage shows. "It's interesting how the most cherished albums have the most cherished sleeves," ponders Hackett. "I think for fans of it there was always that feeling of looking at it and thinking: I'm onto something here that other people don't necessarily know about. One's taste becomes tribal: these albums become important bonding

**"We were then trying to break out of tradition: throwing together different ideas and influences to see if there was a fresh way of putting them all together."**
**Peter Gabriel**

COURTESY OF RE-GENESIS/PRESS

Floral dance: from *Foxtrot* came *that* look...

GETTY IMAGES

**"We'd really gone out on a limb with *Supper's Ready*. It was labyrinthine with layers, and it was by no means certain that the response to it would be positive."**
**Steve Hackett**

elements. Where language leaves off, music begins, and you share a dream."

A dream that's lasted 40 years and counting, in the case of *Foxtrot*...

"Musicians do tend to disparage their early work: the need to continually move forward can be everything. I prefer to celebrate it, and look for what's right about it. If you have passion, energy and honesty you will come up with something valuable. You don't always verbalise it as a band, you try to do things instinctively, listening closely to each other without ego - and sometimes you get a great crystallisation. You may not recognise it at the time, you might think it was just a doodle, but someone else will see it as a full-blown portrait, a *Mona Lisa*. The musicians might still be searching, but the audience, the true owners, will say: look no further. We've found it."

## SUPER FURRY MANIMAL

"I felt like part of the band!" Paul Whitehead on Genesis' prog art explosion.

The memorable visuals of the *Foxtrot* album were the work of British designer Paul Whitehouse. "I did the two previous albums, Trespass and *Nursery Cryme*," he says from his home in California. "I was the in-house art guy for Charisma. Four of the five guys were public schoolboys, so they decided to have a go at English institutions. *Nursery Cryme* was croquet, being the utmost upperclass game.

"Then they said 'What are we going to do for the next album?' and I suggested foxhunting. They said 'What original take have you got on foxhunting that will apply to this record?' In those days, I had friends in British rock bands that had toured America. I was very friendly with Keith Relf from the Yardbirds, who came back using the phrase 'She's such a fox'. It was a new expression for England.

"So it was like, why not have the fox disguise himself as a woman, to get away? Then of course Peter Gabriel did the red dress on stage, with the mask, so that added to it. Supper's Ready was a whole 23-minute thing with multiple costume changes, which I helped with as well.

"I always felt like I was part of the band, because I was included in meetings, and they'd give me the song lyrics as they were doing them. So I was in the loop, and we got on very well.

"But a lot of people didn't see the connection to the record, which has no mention of foxhunting. It was purposely enigmatic." **PS**

**Evolution of a canvas: although the *Foxtrot* artwork disappeared, Paul took pictures of its progress.**

PAUL WHITEHEAD/PRESS

***Find Mr Whitehead at www.paulwhitehead.com***

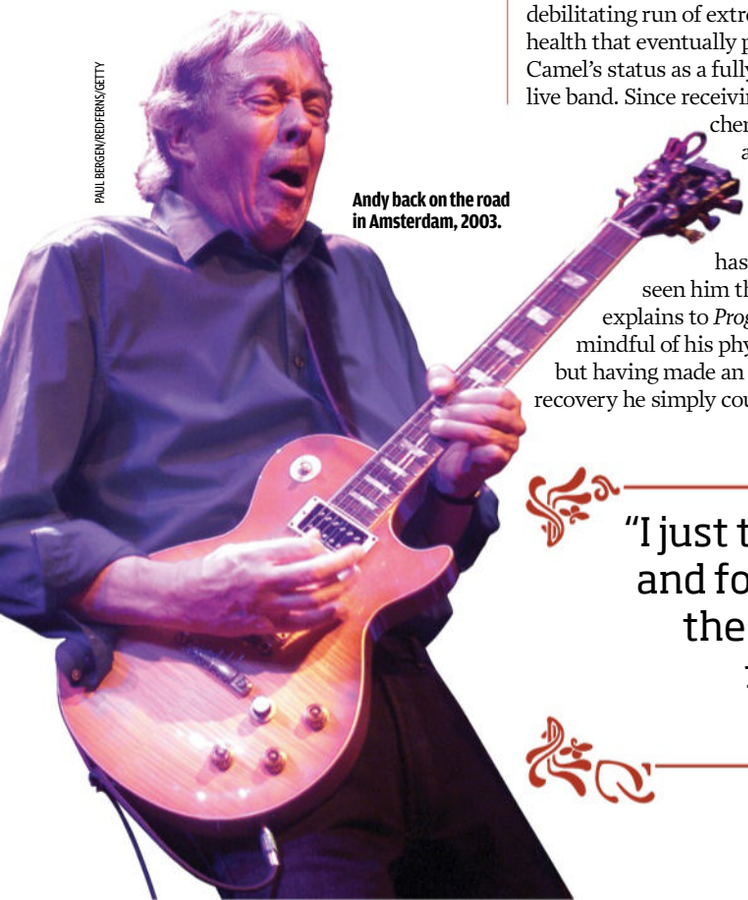
# THE LUCKY MAN

Having battled potentially life-threatening diseases for the best part of 20 years, most **Camel** fans thought their hopes of seeing the band live again were over. However, with health returned, guitarist **Andy Latimer** has resurrected the group for a string of sold-out live dates, a new album and a re-recorded classic. "It's been an interesting ride," he says, "and I'm a lucky man." **Words:** Dom Lawson

The news that Camel were preparing to return to action with some long-awaited live shows was greeted with something approaching joyous hysteria by the band's diehard fan base earlier this year. In truth, the return of the band that brought us such classic albums as *Mirage*, *The Snow Goose* and *Moonmadness* would have been momentous enough, based purely on the fact that no new Camel material has surfaced in over a decade. However, the reality of the band's recent history is that many fans will have long since given up any hope of their heroes re-emerging into today's brave new prog realm. Thanks to the severe and well-documented health problems that guitarist and Camel mainstay Andy Latimer has been battling with over the last 20 years or so, this autumn's flurry of live shows amount to one of the biggest and best surprises of the year. Diagnosed with a blood disorder known as polycythaemia vera in 1992, Latimer experienced an arduous and debilitating run of extremely poor health that eventually put paid to Camel's status as a fully-functioning live band. Since receiving chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant, Latimer's determination has miraculously seen him through. As he explains to *Prog*, he remains mindful of his physical fragility but having made an impressive recovery he simply couldn't resist bringing Camel back for another crack of the whip.

"I missed it, that's the truth," he states. "It took me a long time. I had the bone marrow transplant and I was very ill for two or three years before that, and that was what made me decide not to tour anymore. I was so ill. I had no energy and could barely walk up the drive. Then I got diagnosed with the illness and was told that I had a choice between having the transplant or having 20 months to live! Some choice! So it took me a long while to get through that and come out the other side but I've been getting slowly stronger and stronger, and we've been talking about doing this for a while. I've written quite a bit of new material but we thought the best thing to do is get out on the road and get in touch with the fans and all our friends out there and get the whole machine working again."

There can be few better experiences for focusing the mind and rejuvenating one's passion for making music than a genuine brush with death. Similarly, it is hard to imagine exactly how



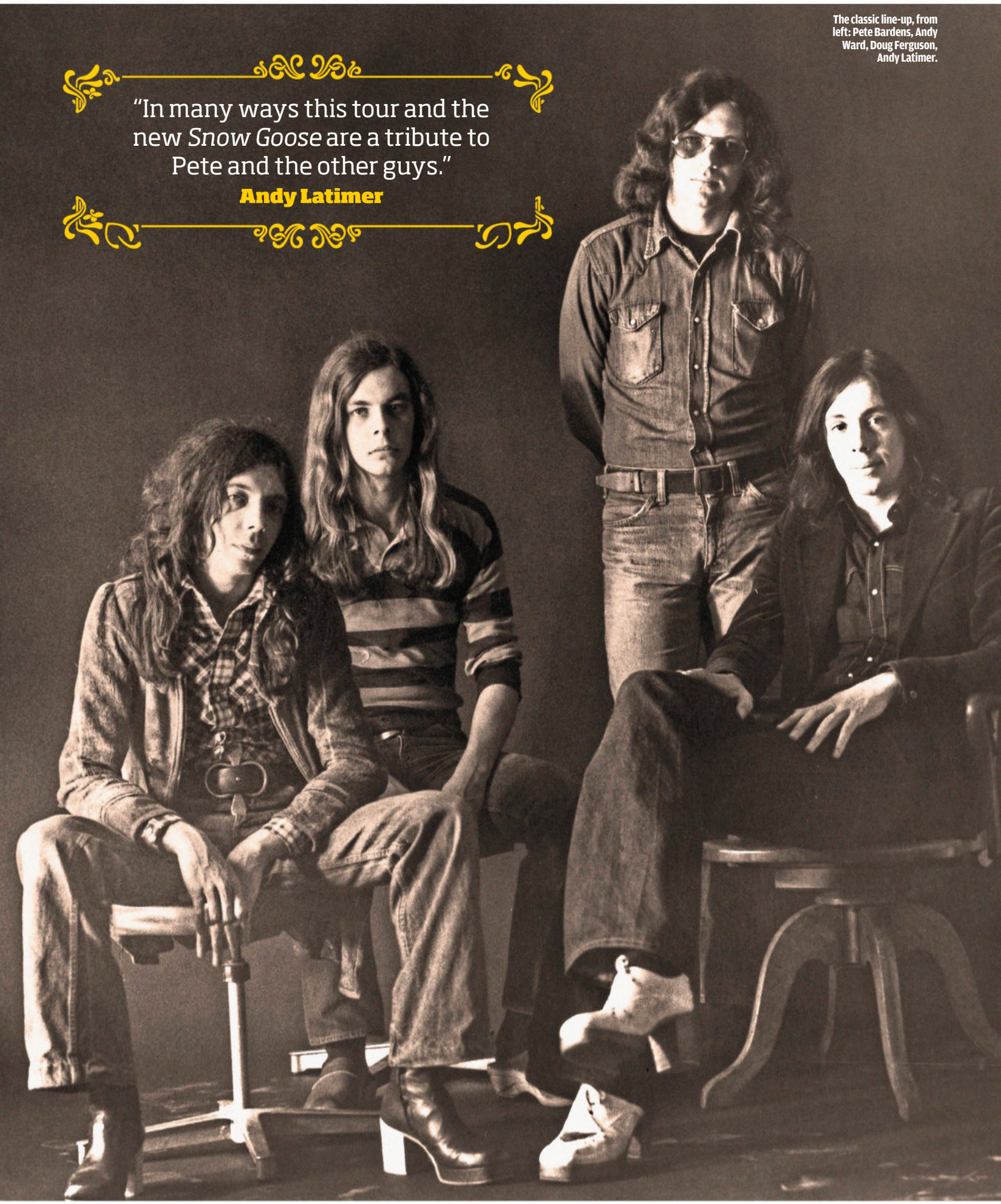
PAUL BERGEN/REDFERNS/GETTY

**Andy back on the road in Amsterdam, 2003.**

> "I just thought that I've got to do it and force my way back in. Sod all the rest of it and keep going forward, you know?"
>
> **Andy Latimer**

REX/DEZO HOFFMANN

Goosing about: Latimer in 1975, just as Camel were about to peak.



The classic line-up, from left: Pete Bardens, Andy Ward, Doug Ferguson, Andy Latimer.

"In many ways this tour and the new *Snow Goose* are a tribute to Pete and the other guys."

**Andy Latimer**

relieved, excited and surprised Andy Latimer must be as he contemplates hitting the road with Camel for the first time in over a decade.

"Yes, there were one or two moments, especially when I was coming out of the illness and getting better, when I thought I'd never do this again," he admits. "I still have a few health issues. My hands became a bit arthritic after the transplant so I have daily challenges with that. Even early this year I was thinking that I didn't know if I could get back into touring because of my hands. I was most concerned about them. But I just thought that I've got to do it and force my way back in. Sod all the rest of it and keep going forward, you know? It's only a short little hop, this first tour. But if all goes to plan, we're thinking about going out again in March and April next year. So once we get back in the saddle it shouldn't be such an effort, because it has been a big effort getting it all back together again."

As observant Camel aficionados will be aware, Andy and his current Camel comrades — drummer Denis Clement, keyboardist Guy LeBlanc and bassist Colin Bass — will be performing *The Snow Goose* in its entirety for fans in the UK, Holland, Belgium and Germany this autumn. Although there are firm plans to record a new studio album in 2014, this first burst of activity represents a great opportunity for fans to hear Camel's most popular work, not to mention what Andy describes as "all the favourite oldies". But in-keeping with prog's spirit of adventure, *The Snow Goose* has undergone its own glorious rebirth behind the scenes as its creator has been preparing to hit the stage again.

"Oh yes, I've re-recorded it and that's been a challenge!" says Andy. "I wanted to keep to the original as much as I could but also I wanted to invest some new things in it, to see if I could improve it. I've re-orchestrated it with Denis, our drummer, so that's been fun. I've written some new bits for it, I think. I've lengthened some of the quieter pieces. But when people listen to it, it has the same feel. It's very true to the original but it's got a lot of new things in it that I hope people will enjoy. It's been a bit of a rush, like it always is in the rock'n'roll world but we're doing artwork now, so it should be available on the tour. I think people will like it."

KEITH MORRIS/GETTY

**Above: Rock'n'roller Pete Bardens in rehearsals for the Marquee show that night.**

It takes an impressive degree of testicular fortitude to meddle with an established genre landmark like *The Snow Goose*, but Andy Latimer's reasoning seems sound enough. He cites errors made in the mastering process by the record company that reissued a substantial part of the Camel catalogue back in 2002 as the principal reason for wanting to revisit and revamp such revered material. He is also eager to stress the huge contribution made by his former band mates Peter Bardens, Doug Ferguson and Andy Ward to the band's unmistakable sound.

PRESS/CAMEL

"Oh yes, they were really important to the *...Goose* and to all those early albums," he avows. "Andy and Doug and Pete, they all contributed so much to the arrangements and the way they worked them out. Especially the rhythm section, Andy and Doug were so tight together. I've asked Colin and Den from the current band to learn the parts and they've done it really faithfully and it's quite amazing. They've done their respective parts and Guy has done all of Pete's parts. Some of the solos are *exactly* the same as Pete's. In many ways this tour and the new *...Goose* are a tribute to Pete and the other guys."

Although Peter Bardens sadly passed away in 2002 and neither Doug Ferguson nor Andy Ward are involved in the current Camel band, there is a strong sense that Andy Latimer feels he is carrying the spirit of that original line-up forward into a bright new future. He even states, on several occasions, how much he would like to re-enact what is arguably the most celebrated moment in Camel history: the band's gig at the Royal Albert Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra back in October 1975, when they performed *The Snow Goose* in its entirety and made their own mighty contribution to prog rock's list of grand gestures.

"It was quite daunting actually, as you can imagine!" Andy laughs. "I remember being really nervous. It was the Royal Albert Hall, for a start, and we only had one rehearsal with the orchestra and that didn't go brilliantly. Orchestras are a bunch of guys and little kids and hooligans! Some of the live tapes that I heard, which later became part of a live record, they're so funny. You can isolate the brass section and the guys are saying 'What time does this finish? When can we go down the pub?' So half the orchestra was, for various reasons, going 'Oh this is okay' and others were totally disinterested in playing their parts. The whole gig was an occasion, though. I wouldn't say it was the best gig we did playing *The Snow Goose*, but we felt that we owed it to everybody to do at least one show with the orchestra, even though we were told by management that even if we sold out the Royal Albert Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra we'd still lose five grand or more! Our

## ONE HUMP OR TWO?

### Prog rockers choose their favourite Camel album...

**MIRAGE by John Mitchell**

"When I was but a snip of a lad there were only a few musicians that inspired me to pick up a guitar and have a go myself. Andy Latimer was one such person and *Mirage* was the album responsible. I was heavily drawn to the singy front pickup sound that both Dave Gilmour and Latimer embraced, the main difference being that Latimer opted for a Gibson and Gilmour, a Strat. *Mirage* was only the band's second album but was technically a vast step forward from the debut considering their age and ambition. I love this album – particularly songs such as *Freefall* and *The White Rider* not to mention the closing 12-minute opus *Lady Fantasy*, which shows the band at their most proggy and determined best. From here I drew a line to Floyd and painted my room black! Who knows where I would be now if I'd never heard this?" **DL**

GEMS/REDFERNS/GETTY

The lads in old London town, 1972.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

motto was 'Fuck it! We're doing what we want!' We didn't care. That was our attitude back then. We were getting a lot of money from the record company, because we used to go out with three screens with projections and movies and explosions and smoke and all sorts of stuff. It was at great expense. It was huge and silly and we couldn't afford it! We certainly can't afford it now. But who knows what fortunes will come our way? I'd like to do it with an orchestra again at the Albert Hall.

## ONE HUMP OR TWO?

### Prog rockers choose their favourite Camel albums...

**THE SNOW GOOSE by Matt Stevens**

"Pastoral... that's what people say about *The Snow Goose*. One guy reviewed my *Ghost* album and said he hated it because it was pastoral. Well, *The Snow Goose* is pastoral squared! None more pastoral! It's like early Crimson meets some weird 70s library music. It's lovely and quintessentially English. The story it's based on is heartbreaking and it really comes across in the music. I know how hard it is to make an interesting instrumental prog record and *The Snow Goose* really works. It really does feel like an imaginary soundtrack, with some lovely guitar from Andy Latimer, the thing that made Camel so unique. It makes you think of kids' TV from the 70s for some reason. It's full of autumnal melancholy and very odd. And *La Princesse Perdue* is a lovely ending." **DL**

That would be fantastic."

Revisiting *The Snow Goose* and performing it live again could hardly be a better gift to patient Camel fans, but the album is by no means the only jewel in the band's sonic crown. Eleven studio albums deep, the Camel catalogue is one of the more diverse, inventive and surprising in the prog canon, a view that is often overlooked due to the diminishing commercial returns that Andy and his comrades underwent towards the end of the 70s and during the 80s. The guitarist remains philosophical about those days, admitting to a partial creative decline after the original line-up began to disintegrate but also giving credit where it is due to those who joined him for that part of the ride.

"At the time we thought *Moonmadness* was flawed, because everybody was saying we should do another ...*Snow Goose*," he recalls. "But we've always been a band that didn't want to repeat ourselves and we wanted to do something different. Any sensible artist would probably have done *The Son Of Snow Goose*, but not us! That's probably my favourite album from the Pete, Andy and Doug era, for a lot of reasons. There are some great pieces on it and the band was harmonious and working well and the rot hadn't set in. We were still all very happy and accepted our roles in the band and it wasn't until *Rain Dances* when everything shifted. Doug had left and when he left, everybody's roles changed and it wasn't the same band anymore. Richard Sinclair came in and he was a very talented chap, but he had his own agenda. He wanted to take the band in a certain direction, but Pete and I were the main writers, so there was this tug of war going on. It was very topsy-turvy from then on, but it gave us the opportunity to work with some wonderful musicians and expand. By the time we got to *Breathless*, Pete and I were arguing about everything, and it shows! But these things happen in your life and you do the best you can in the circumstances."

Such is his self-effacing demeanour and, you might say, the somewhat unflashy and humble nature of Camel's music that many casual observers may be surprised to learn that the band's history has been fairly turbulent and not a little dark at times. Andy Latimer's prolonged battle with illness and Peter Bardens' tragic demise at the hands of lung cancer at the comparatively tender age of 56 would be enough for most people to deal with, but Andy Ward's downward spiral into alcoholism and drug dependency during the early 80s has clearly had a potent impact on his former colleague.

Andy, Doug and Andrew in rehearsal, 1975.

KEITH MORRIS/GETTY

## ONE HUMP OR TWO?

Prog rockers choose their favourite Camel albums...

### MOONMADNESS by Mikael Åkerfeldt

"Let's get this out of the way... this, ladies and gentlemen, is one of the best records ever released. 1976 was, in my book, a rather weak year for prog. Not so much *here* of course. Andy Latimer, who is like royalty to me, has been mysteriously overlooked throughout the years. As I see it, he's right up there with the absolute cream of rock guitar players. People familiar with Camel's catalogue would only tip their hats in agreement. Camel's artillery of fantastic songs in 1976 speaks for itself: *Song Within A Song*, *Air Born*, *Lunar Sea* (*dat* guitar solo!), Peter Bardens' ethereal and beautiful *Spirit Of The Water* and *Chord Change* are all beyond top notch. Even the weakest track, *Another Night*, is superb. In fact, that's a good way to end this review: even the weakest song is a bloody masterpiece!" **DL**

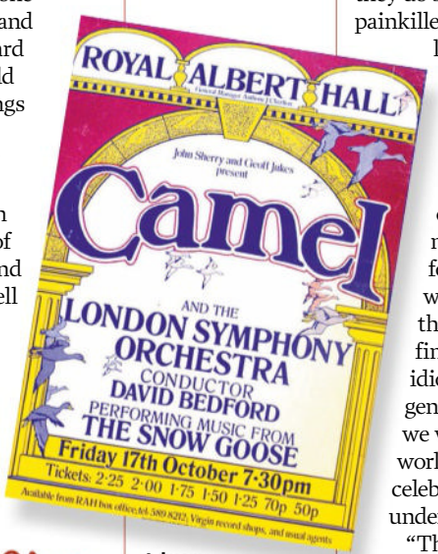
Thankfully, Andy does bring relatively glad tidings about his erstwhile drumming foil.

"I haven't spoken to Andy for a year or so now but he was doing very well when I last spoke to him," he says. "He's into growing things and he's a keen gardener. He really did go through it. He went off the rails when Doug left the band. That was the start of Andy going slightly mad, and it's very easy to do in a group situation. He was drinking far too much and he was taking an awful lot of drugs too, so it was inevitable that he was going to end up the way he did. It was so sad for all of us. We couldn't save him really. We all tried. But when someone's on that path it's really difficult to go clean. It was part of his life and he was totally out of control. I think he did go to rehab at the Priory for a while and he did have some counselling, I think. But in the end he made a really good decision for his life, which was to get out of the rock'n'roll business. We were all sad and full of heartache that we couldn't work with him anymore. I loved Andy and his playing. He was a fantastic drummer when he was straight, but when he wasn't it was hell!"

Having weathered a few formidable storms during the 40 years since forming Camel, not least his own near-death experience, Andy Latimer could be forgiven for shying away from the spotlight and retreating into quiet retirement. But his decision to rev up his creative engines again, even as he continues to endure the after-effects of such severe medical treatment, marks him out as one of prog's great survivors, albeit one that seems to let life's slings and arrows bounce off his fretboard rather than allow them to hold him back from doing the things he loves. Touchingly, Andy makes a point of stating how much he appreciates all the support that he received from Camel fans from all corners of the globe during his illness and how, without that groundswell of encouragement, he could well have bowed out altogether and never made this admirable comeback after all.

"I had so much support over the internet when I was ill and it was wonderful," he states. "I really think it saved me. So this is kind of a thank you to everybody, to be going out again. It's a wonderful opportunity.

It's a very nice feeling to be getting back into it and I hope my health, fingers crossed, will hold out. My determination is strong. If my hands seize up at one gig and I don't play as well, so be it. Hopefully that won't happen and it's not much fun when they do seize up, but I've got plenty of painkillers so I'll be there! There are a lot of people much worse off, aren't there?"

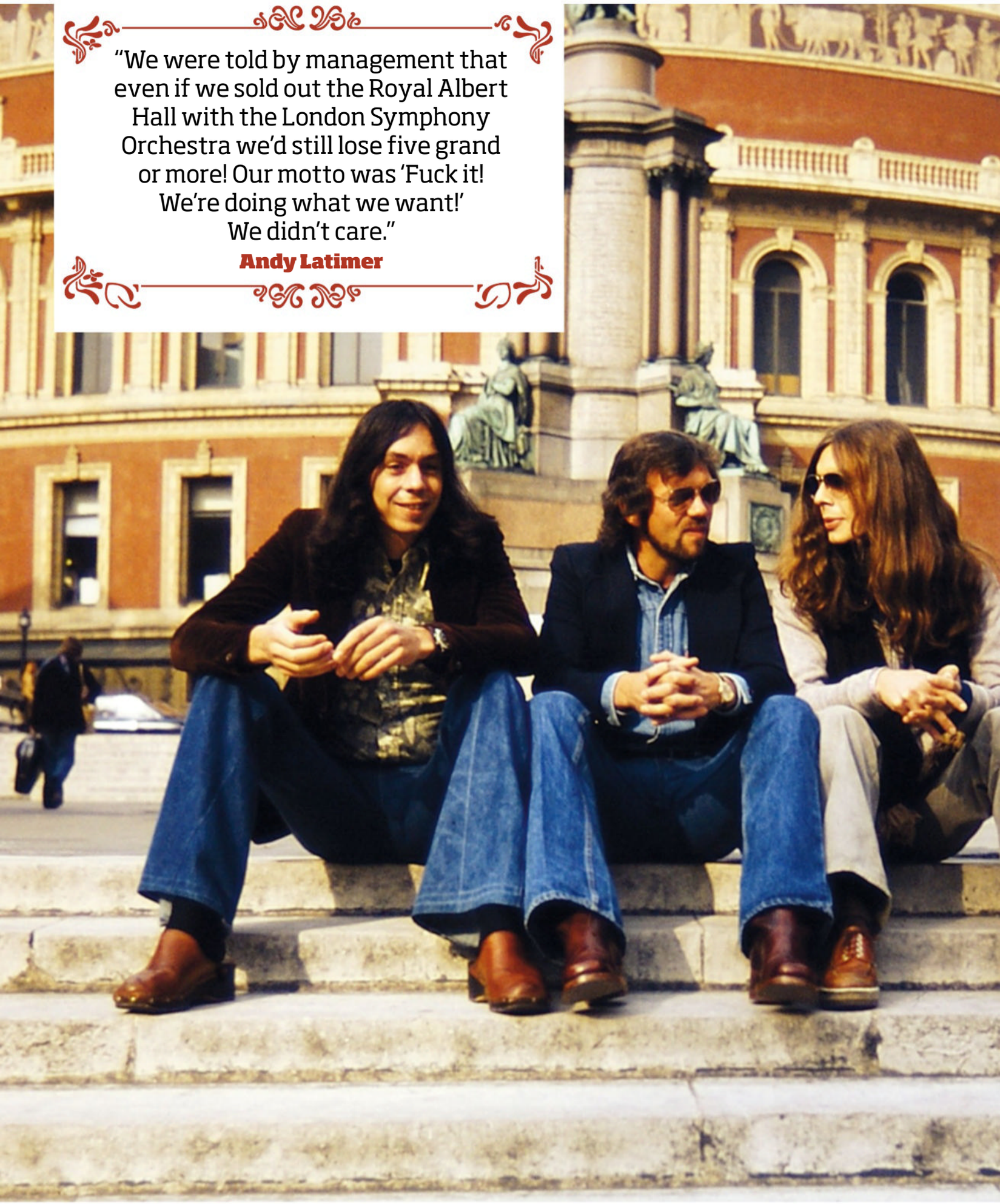



**A dream realised: Camel headline the prestigious RAH!**

Modest soul that he is, Andy Latimer will never be accused of being one of prog's grandstanding show-offs and, in truth, Camel were never the vast commercial force that Genesis, Yes or ELP were back in the 70s. However, they did make some of the very finest and most wonderfully idiosyncratic music that the genre has ever produced. As we welcome them back to our world, maybe it's time to celebrate these underrated underdogs of prog rock anew?

"That's very kind of you but it's very difficult for me to comment really!" chuckles Andy. "I never think 'Wow, we're never mentioned in magazines!" or anything like that. I just think Genesis and Floyd and ELP all received so much more popularity. Their albums were huge. I've always just accepted who and where we were and I don't really think about why we didn't reach those same heights. It doesn't occur to me. This is what we do and if people like it then obviously I've done something right and everyone I've played with has done something right. It's been an interesting ride and I'm a lucky man!"

> "I had so much support over the internet when I was ill and it was wonderful. I really think it saved me. So this is kind of a thank you to everybody, to be going out again. It's a wonderful opportunity."
>
> **Andy Latimer**



"We were told by management that even if we sold out the Royal Albert Hall with the London Symphony Orchestra we'd still lose five grand or more! Our motto was 'Fuck it! We're doing what we want!' We didn't care."

**Andy Latimer**

# CAMEL: THE HOLE STORY

Now one of the most powerful men in the music industry, **Max Hole** began his rock'n'roll career managing prog legends Camel. From chart hits and sell-out shows to infighting and attempted suicide, here he reveals the inside story of the band's rise and fall.

**Words:** Dom Lawson **Main image:** Barry Plummer

With very few exceptions, every successful rock band has a team of managers and assistants behind the scenes that work tirelessly to facilitate their charges' upward ascent. For Camel, the power behind the prog throne came in the form of managers Max Hole and Geoff Jukes. Now chairman and CEO of Universal Music Group International, Hole tells *Prog* how Camel rose to fame and helped him to find his own path as a music industry mover and shaker.

**Son of the desert: former Camel manager Max Hole today.**

"I was a social secretary at Kent University and I used to book all the bands there," he recalls. "It was a wonderful time. I booked The Who for £1000, I remember. I booked Family for £600 pounds and I booked Led Zeppelin for £1200! I think we made money on all of those, but if we had lost money, the student union used to subsidise entertainment for the university, so it was wonderful.

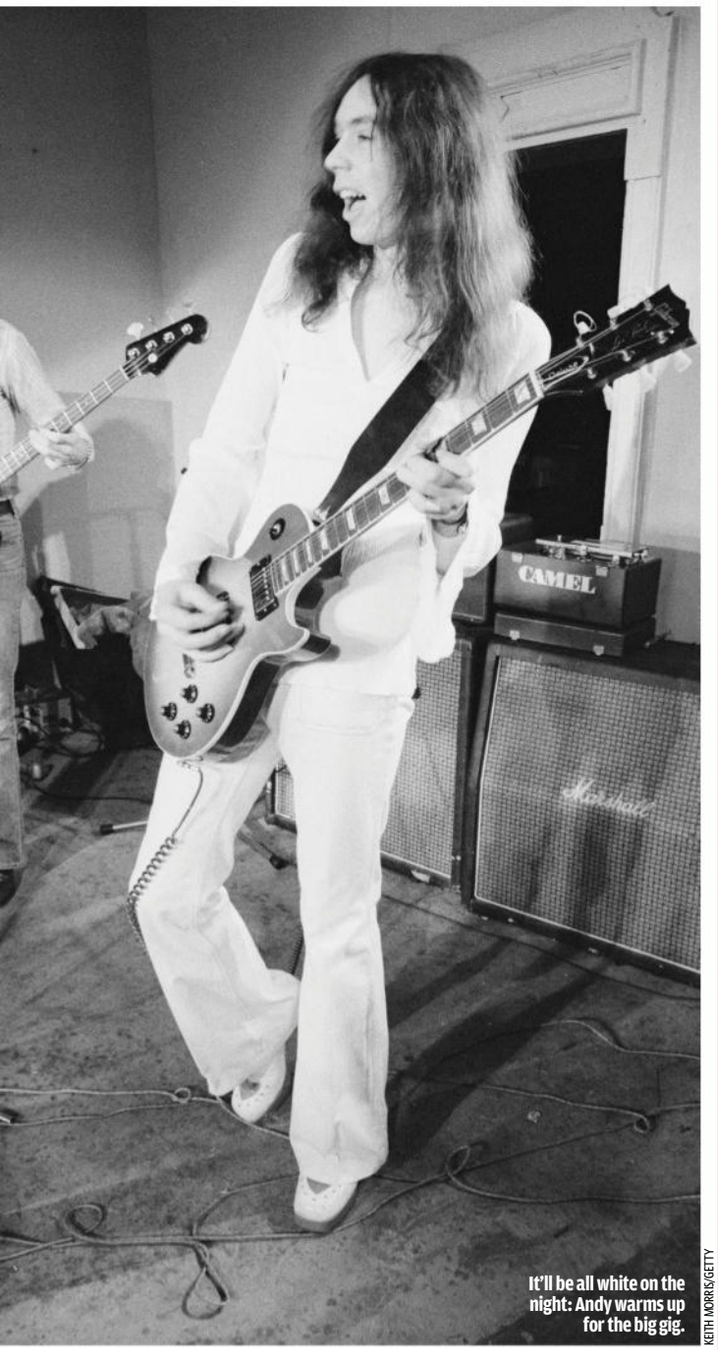
"Geoff Jukes was a booker at Chrysalis Agency and I used to book bands from him. And then he left Chrysalis and was gonna start his own business and he asked me to be his partner. So we started, in February '72, a company called Gemini Artists. Then, I can't remember how, but Geoff somehow met Peter Bardens from Camel. Geoff was the guy who brought the band into Gemini, and so I'm guessing it was around February '72. That would be when I first became aware of them."

Although the progressive rock explosion was in full swing by the time Hole and his partner became involved, Camel always had an air of inveterate square peg about them and were a long way from being just another bunch of virtuosos with their eyes on commercial glory. With their unique sound, driven by the remarkable six-string prowess of Andy Latimer, Camel were always destined to stand or fall by their own idiosyncratic approach to the music of the era.

"I think the main thing was Andy Latimer as a guitar player, to be honest," states Max. "Peter Bardens was a little bit famous already. He had worked with Van Morrison or someone similar, so he seemed like a bit of a star and then Latimer seemed like an amazing player. Bardens wasn't a bad player either! But I always remember that our worry about Camel at that time was that there wasn't a singer. Peter used to sing a bit and Andy used to sing a bit but neither of them were great singers.

"Bardens was famous enough that we could get press and gigs, and that was our forte at Gemini at the time. But Andy is an amazing guitar player, simple as that. A lyrical, melodic, brilliant guitar player. He's up there with David Gilmour for me, as a guitarist. That was his strength and the band's strength. And he was a very dynamic guy too. He used to make things happen. He was an okay singer, too, but he ain't Jon Anderson or Peter Gabriel!"

Initially signed to MCA, Camel enjoyed some minor attention and success with their self-titled 1972 debut, but it would be the follow-up, *Mirage*, that would cement their status as one of the prominent prog acts of the day. As Hole explains, once the ball started rolling, the British quartet




It'll be all white on the night: Andy warms up for the big gig.

KEITH MORRIS/GETTY

## ONE HUMP OR TWO?

### Prog rockers choose their favourite Camel album...

**BREATHLESS by Eivind Johansen**

"This album always brings me back to a time when my girlfriend and me rather unofficially spent a week together in my mother's apartment in a stoned and blissful state of mind. Listening to it now, I still sense the uplifting and joyous feeling, the joie de vivre that Camel's music could bring. The breezy title track is progressive rock with a pop sensibility that is warm and with plenty of hooks – I guess that's what they were aiming for. *Echoes* has some great interplay between Barden's synthesizers and Latimer's guitars, and is Camel at their free-flowing best. *The Sleeper* is another strong track with a fabulous keyboard intro and I like the ballad *Starlight Ride*, with its classical touches in the instrumental sections. *Breathless* is not always successful; sometimes it's jazz-funk, or lightweight. But it's from a time when everything still was possible." **DL**

> "Andy is an amazing guitar player, simple as that. He was a lyrical, melodic, brilliant guitar player. He's up there with David Gilmour for me."
>
> **Max Hole**

began to reap the rewards on both sides of the Atlantic.

"MCA dropped them after the first album, but Geoff and I then got a production deal with Decca Records so we did a deal with a wonderful man called Hugh Mendel. He was a very well-known, legendary guy. There was another legendary guy there called Dick Rowe, who famously turned down The Beatles. But then he also signed the Rolling Stones! Hugh also signed a lot of luminaries, like the Moody Blues and I think he worked with people like Lonnie Donegan and Tommy Steele. So we got this production deal with Decca and we signed Camel to our production company and hence *Mirage* came out in 1974 on Deram with a little GAMA logo on the sleeve, which stood for Gemini Artists Management Agency. *Mirage* did a bit in the UK and a little bit in Germany, but it did very well on the West Coast of America, so they started touring over there."

In terms of promotional gimmicks, the artwork for *Mirage* remains one of the most audacious and efficient album covers of all time. Borrowing from the iconic Camel cigarette box design, it was almost as important in the selling of this distinctive band's brand as the music on the album itself. It was an inspired piece of marketing and one that would be largely unthinkable 40 years later.

"Obviously we had to get permission from the Camel cigarette company," says Hole. "Nowadays, the Camel cigarette company would've paid a fortune for that, although I'm not sure you're allowed to do things like that any more! It was a company called RJ Reynolds, who owned Camel cigarettes back then, and we had some meetings with these American executives, and with some in Switzerland, and I remember them suggesting, 'Could we call the album 20 In The Pack?'! I remember that vividly. In the end it turned out to be a memorable cover and was really good for the cigarette company too."

With their reputation growing by the day, Camel embarked on their first ever US tour in 1974, collectively hopeful that they would be following in the footsteps of hugely successful UK peers like Genesis, Yes and Pink Floyd. Four young men from the south of England with only a limited amount of touring experience between them, they somehow negotiated this potentially jarring change of lifestyle with cheerful aplomb, although as Hole recalls, there were already signs that perfect harmony and personal chemistry were more finely balanced than it had initially seemed.

"Did they go off the rails in America? Not really. Certainly not to start with. Bardens had been there and done it a bit, so he seemed like he fitted in to that world, whereas the other three were just guys from Surrey. They all came from Guildford and they were all regular middle-class guys with a good work ethic. To be honest, Bardens was a bit of a prima donna! Andy Latimer was always the main creative driving force and as that happened more and more, he and Bardens clashed. Doug Ferguson [Camel bassist] was the business guy, he made the trains run on time. Andy Ward [drummer] was a very likeable and easy-going guy, but he was closest to going off the rails. He always used to smoke a lot of weed and, although probably none of us knew it, he was a depressive kind of guy."

Regardless of looming tensions between its members, Camel powered onwards and hit their undeniable creative and commercial peak with the release of *The Snow Goose* in 1975. Widely regarded as one of the finest concept works of the first prog era, this wholly instrumental tour de force propelled Camel into the UK album charts and is still their most popular album to this day. However, despite its status as a hallowed classic, the birth of this fluid masterwork was anything but problem-free.

"*The Snow Goose* was a challenge because it was instrumental," Hole admits. "The fact that they had a concept gave people something to talk about and then, of course, they played it live. The album came out and did okay but then it absolutely broke off them playing two songs from it on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. It really was the power of television. I can't remember

what happened chart-wise but I'm sure it did something on the first week it was out because we'd built up a fan base, but doing the *Whistle Test* was a real key moment. The US was unhappy about it being an instrumental record because they couldn't get it played on the radio. So in a way, *Mirage* set us up very well in America but *The Snow Goose* was a disappointment there."

Famously, Camel celebrated their new-found success by performing *The Snow Goose* in its entirety with the London Symphony orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall in October 1975: a momentous occasion for all concerned, it deserves to be regarded as the pinnacle of the original Camel line-up's career as a live band.

"I remember it was a huge deal and the band were very nervous!" laughs Hole. "When you're dealing with an orchestra you never get enough rehearsal time. But it went pretty well. There were a few sound challenges. I don't remember it being, 'Oh my god, it's the best gig I've ever seen in my life!' but they pulled it off and they were all pretty happy about it afterwards. It was a tough thing to do. In those days sound systems weren't nearly as sophisticated as they are now, so trying to get a good sound from a rock group with an orchestra was hard."

In 1976, Camel released *Moonmadness* an album that many fans regard as the band's greatest masterpiece. It was another commercial triumph, but as their former manager recalls, it also seemed to represent the end of the line in terms of an upward career path. From then on, despite continuing to make great records and sustaining a loyal fan base, Camel never quite managed to sidestep the law of diminishing returns, as the music world steadily lost interest in progressive rock and switched allegiance to other, more fashionable forms of music.

"The thing is, when you were in it and absorbed in it, you didn't see disco or punk as a big problem," says Hole. "We thought that the genres could co-exist. But with the benefit of hindsight, it meant that there was less room in the pipe. A lot of the magazines and papers of the day would talk about what was hip and fashionable, so the progressive rock boom got pushed to the back pages or out, and whatever television shows were around weren't that interested in booking Camel."

As the 80s dawned, Camel were little more than a revered cult band, primarily driven by Andy Latimer, and events within the band began to overshadow the music they were making – most notably when drummer Andy Ward attempted suicide in 1981.

"Yes, that was around the time that I stopped working with the band," Hole sighs. "It was terrible. He slashed his wrists. In truth, I was kind of sick of it all by then. By 1982 it wasn't really going anywhere and I was a bit tired of it all and I was offered a job out of the blue so I took it like a shot."

Max Hole departed the Camel fold in 1982 and has since become one of the most powerful people in the music business, with such huge mainstream successes as Simply Red and Snow Patrol under his belt. However, he is keen to give credit to the band that first enabled him to participate in the crazy rock'n'roll world.

"It was a period of my life that remains close to my heart," he says. "Do I sit and listen to Camel records all the time? No, I don't, but it was a period that I feel very fondly about. It was a great learning process. I learned about making records, I learned about going on tour. I learned about the struggle of being inside the bubble of a group trying to make it. I learned about the business and about struggling with not enough money. I was very tight with Andy Latimer for many years and I think he was very disappointed in me when I left and was a bit fed up with me at the time. But yeah, I feel very fondly about it. They were a great bunch of guys."

REX/ALAN MESSER

That *Old Grey Whistle Test* performance, "a key moment" in Camel's success.

> "When you were in it and absorbed in it, you didn't see disco or punk as a big problem. We thought that the genres could co-exist."
>
> **Max Hole**

## ONE HUMP OR TWO?

### Prog rockers choose their favourite Camel albums...

**STATIONARY TRAVELLER by Bruce Soord**

"As a kid struggling to get to grips with the guitar, I had two heroes: Ian Bairnson and Andy Latimer. Andy is a wonderfully melodic player who can really make his guitar weep. And, of course, he's also a great songwriter too. *Stationary Traveller* is a weird one, because it plays more like a Latimer solo album as opposed to the 'classic' line-up of the 70s. But as soon as you hear Andy's guitar, you've got your Camel. The album also features musicians from the session world that played on The Alan Parsons Project – David Paton, Mel Collins, Chris Rainbow and Haydn Bendall, and I think that all comes across sonically on this record. The production is really tight. The opening track, *Pressure Points*, has a guitar lick that I blatantly stole for a solo on The Pineapple Thief's album *Variations On A Dream*. There, I've said it!" **DL**

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# The 100 Greatest Prog Albums Of All Time

Ten years ago when *Prog* magazine (but certainly not progressive music) was in its infancy, we asked readers to vote for their 50 top prog albums of all time. Then, as we approached our 50th issue in 2015, we went back to see how the landscape had changed and we asked readers and musicians to help us compile a list of the 100 greatest prog albums of all time. We were inundated with Top 10s from all over the world and we are proud to present the list for your perusal. Is it still the same, or have old favourites been ousted in place of young upstarts? And who is No. 1? Turn the page, dear reader, and find out…

## 100 Drama
### YES

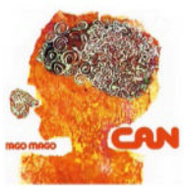
*(ATLANTIC, 1980)*

**WE SAY:** The first Yes album without Jon Anderson could have been a disaster. Instead, Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes entered the fold and it was brilliant business as usual.
**YOU SAY:** "It didn't seem like it at the time, but what a pivotal album this would be for the band in terms of how their sound would develop. And my, how it's stood the test of time." — **Alan Christopher**

## 99 Focus II (Moving Waves)
### FOCUS

*(IMPERIAL, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** It starts with the untouchable *Hocus Pocus* and ends with one of prog's greatest epics, *Eruption*. Forget the World Cup — *this* was a massive victory for the Dutch.
**YOU SAY:** "While the UK led the prog rock movement, this band from Holland snuck in from the left-field with a unique brand of jazz/rock fusion. And with yodelling thrown in for good measure." — **Chris Tucker**



## 98 Tago Mago
### CAN

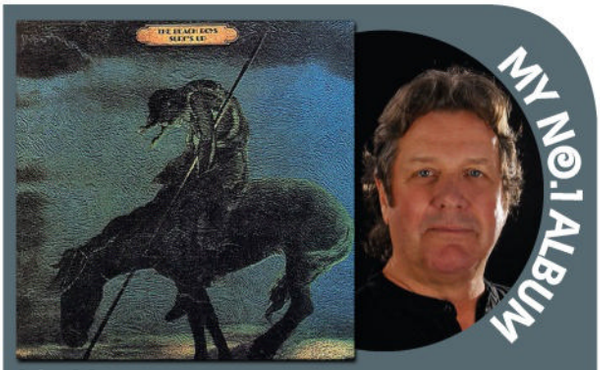
*(UNITED ARTISTS, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Like music beamed down to Earth from some deeply peculiar planet, Can's greatest masterpiece remains deliciously alien but never less than utterly hypnotic.
**YOU SAY:** "If we think about the real meaning of progressive rock, we should always remember what this band were all about." — **Andrea Van Cleef**

## 97 Voyage Of The Acolyte
### STEVE HACKETT

*(CHARISMA, 1975)*

**WE SAY:** Leaving Genesis as they hit a commercial peak was a brave move, but Steve Hackett made the decision count on his first, and perhaps finest, solo album.




### John Wetton

**Beach Boys *Surf's Up*** *(REPRISE, 1971)*
"The summer of '71 had so many musical milestones; Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, Joni Mitchell's *Blue*, Miles Davis' *Sketches Of Spain*, but *Surf's Up* was a revelation. I was in Family, a major player in the first wave of British progressive bands, but this collection from the iconic California surf-pop band shifted my parameters, blurring all the boundaries of my musical vocabulary. I marvelled at Van Dyke Parks' mind-expanding poetry of the title track, wallowing in the glorious harmonies. Both composition and production absolutely floored me. The whole experience was my nirvana. And the cover? Mega prog!"

PRESS

**YOU SAY:** "If this was material that Genesis had rejected, it's easy to imagine why a solo career made sense to Hackett." — **Francisco Roldan**

## 96 Lizard
### KING CRIMSON

*(ISLAND, 1970)*

**WE SAY:** An often underrated jewel in the Crimson crown, *Lizard* saw Robert Fripp heading further into his own unique sonic world. The title track alone is prog nirvana.
**YOU SAY:** "I've always strongly identified with this dark horse of an album. It's wild, it's crazy, and every bit as colourful as the jacket art. To me, that's what makes it special. One of the things I love about this album is how, at just about any given moment, it sounds like the band might just fly off the rails. Wonderful!" — **Ian Beabout**

## 95 To Our Children's Children's Children
### THE MOODY BLUES

*(THRESHOLD, 1969)*

**WE SAY:** Space travel? Check. Woozy psychedelia? Check. Orchestral pomp? Check. The Moody Blues' second classic album of 1969 added high-grade fuel to the pioneers' blazing fire.

**YOU SAY:** "Building on their earlier albums, something just clicked with this stunning work. It plays seamlessly, almost like it was one epic piece. You could make an argument for *Days Of Future Passed* as one of the first prog albums, but *...Children...* truly was and is prog." — **Bob Metcalf**

## 94 Jeff Wayne's Musical Version Of The War Of The Worlds
### JEFF WAYNE

*(COLUMBIA, 1978)*

**WE SAY:** If aliens ever do invade the Earth, it seems very unlikely that they will provide a soundtrack that is anywhere near as mesmerising and eccentric as Jeff Wayne's magnum opus.
**YOU SAY:** "Superb songs. Incredible arrangements. And *Forever Autumn*!" — **Simon Hughes**

## 93 Storm Corrosion
### STORM CORROSION

*(ROADRUNNER, 2012)*

**WE SAY:** An overwhelming and inspired trip through rapture and discord conjured by Steven Wilson and Mikael Åkerfeldt, *Storm Corrosion* lived up to its potential and then some.
**YOU SAY:** "*Ljudet Innan* has become my planned funeral song — it's both fresh and harsh. I love this album and wished both Mikael and Steven had decided to tour. Perhaps in the future?" — **Rachel (dancinglemming)**

## 92 The Six Wives Of Henry VIII
### RICK WAKEMAN

*(A&M, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** Prog is often at its best when it embraces the preposterous. Rick's instrumental paean to the fickle king was wonderfully barmy and full of glorious moments.
**YOU SAY:** "I spent hours as a teenager listening to this and staring at the overhead shot of all the keyboards on the inner sleeve. Incredible stuff." — **Pete 'Pedro' Waite**

## 91 Damnation
**OPETH**

*(MUSIC FOR NATIONS, 2003)*

**WE SAY:** The first Opeth album to abandon metal entirely, *Damnation* trumped its heavier sibling *Deliverance* by bringing Mikael Åkerfeldt's masterful songwriting to the fore.
**YOU SAY:** "Some have criticised this album for being 'samey' but I think the way the songs cohere together is one of its biggest strengths. It's one of the best prog albums to have on in the background because if you dip into it, you're rewarded with rich, complex and emotional music, but it's not invasive if you're busy doing something else." **— Chavez Hyndman**

## 90 Afraid Of Sunlight
**MARILLION**

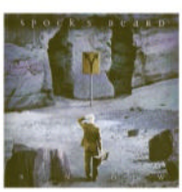
*(EMI, 1995)*

**WE SAY:** Thrumming with subtle beauty and delicate urgency, Marillion's eighth studio album contains some of their greatest songs and most bewitching sonic detours.
**YOU SAY:** "Song for song, the best album of the 90s. Every track is a monster, and the soundscape has to be heard to be believed." **— Nicholas Caluda**

## 89 Awake
**DREAM THEATER**

*(EASTWEST, 1994)*

**WE SAY:** Following up an album as lauded as *Images And Words* was, apparently, no problem at all for the progressive virtuosos. *Awake* was heavier, certainly, but no less extraordinary.
**YOU SAY:** "Not their most lauded effort, but a full listen through the album reveals a lot of themes and variations in later songs that throw you back to another track. Wonderfully composed and, as always, perfectly executed." **— Caleb Roman**



## 88 Snow
**SPOCK'S BEARD**

*(INSIDEOUT, 2002)*

**WE SAY:** A gargantuan feast of melodic euphoria, *Snow* was the last Spock's album to feature Neal Morse. As swansongs go, it was a monumental and gorgeous success.
**YOU SAY:** "They always had such a terrific way with melody and such great instrument playing. And it was Neal's farewell album too." **— Eric Roper**

## 87 OK Computer
**RADIOHEAD**

*(PARLOPHONE, 1997)*

**WE SAY:** Eschewing the indie bluster of their earlier work, Thom Yorke and co embraced experimentation and a bleak sense of unease on their third, universally lauded opus.
**YOU SAY:** "Often labelled the Pink Floyd of the 90s, and it's a title that absolutely fits. Radiohead take the listener through a soundscape of songs, noises, melodies and lyrics that are practically all perfect. It established the band as prog, although many will argue against that." **— Emil Colosimo**

## 86 Six
**MANSUN**

*(PARLOPHONE, 1998)*

**WE SAY:** Falsely decried as an indie band, Mansun were deeply entrenched in prog territory. Their ingenious second album thrilled with its technicolour art-rock flair.
**YOU SAY:** "Imagine a parallel universe where Marillion have been reared on Wire and Magazine instead of Genesis and Pink Floyd. Put Bowie on vocals and you have all the ingredients for this criminally underrated album." **— Chris Barlow**

## 85 UK
**UK**

*(E.G., 1978)*

**WE SAY:** Supreme prog with a jazz heart, UK's debut was every bit as stunning as a collaboration between John Wetton, Allan Holdsworth and Bill Bruford deserved to be.
**YOU SAY:** "A supergroup at the time, with great songs and playing by all four players. Too bad they weren't around longer. I did enjoy the reunion a couple of years ago though." **— Dave Kapp**

## 84 Remedy Lane
**PAIN OF SALVATION**

*(INSIDEOUT, 2002)*

**WE SAY:** A conceptual tale of self-discovery, Pain Of Salvation's *Remedy Lane* took the Swedish crew to new heights of imaginative splendour. It proved to be their well-deserved breakthrough.
**YOU SAY:** "Sweden is the country of the absolute prog metal gods. Daniel Gildenlöw is honestly the best vocalist I've ever heard, and if you add true emotions, great songwriting and genius lyrics, you get an album so painfully full of emotions, yet it's just fantastic." **— Michal Bojan**

## 83 Still Life
**OPETH**

*(PEACEVILLE, 1999)*

**WE SAY:** Still regarded by many fans as a career high point, *Still Life*'s deft blend of beauty and brutality was lauded by metal *and* prog fans. Opeth's first true classic.
**YOU SAY:** "A monster of an album that never lets up and never lets you get too comfortable. A masterful combination of brute force and tempered grace, where it feels like heaven and hell are colliding." **— Jordan Griffin**

PRESS

### Theo Travis

**The Who *Quadrophenia*** *(TRACK, 1973)*
"While I might easily have chosen *In the Court Of The Crimson King* as it's so wonderful, huge, uplifting, groundbreaking and indeed an uncanny masterpiece, *Quadrophenia* is my favourite progressive – note the lower-case 'p' – album. I guess this fits in the 'prog not prog' category. I particularly like the opening seascape and distant voices introducing the four different sides of the main character, Jimmy, then *pow!* – in comes the 'Ooo' with *The Real Me*. *Quadrophenia* and its songs, sound, story and photography provided a whole package that took everything to another level, and is just so gobsmackingly perfect."

## 82 Subterranea
## IQ

*(GEP, 1997)*

**WE SAY:** Double concept albums are prog's preening lifeblood and few have nailed the idea with such effervescent vigour as IQ. Prog *was* alive and well in the 90s, you know.
**YOU SAY:** "One of my favourite prog bands had to be in here. And this is a classic concept album." — **Phil Richards**

## 81 Leftoverture
## KANSAS

*(EPIC, 1976)*

**WE SAY:** It may have been overshadowed by its radio-conquering opening track, *Carry On Wayward Son*, but *Leftoverture* was proof that Kansas were prog and proud.
**YOU SAY:** "Forever associated with the radio staples *Dust In The Wind* and *Carry On Wayward Son*, the breadth of Kansas' creative output was so much more than that, ably demonstrated throughout this album." — **Phil Derby**

## 80 Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence
## DREAM THEATER

*(ELEKTRA, 2002)*

**WE SAY:** Bigger, smarter, heavier and more adventurous than ever before, *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence* proved that there was more to Dream Theater than prog metal. A staggering monument to their talent.
**YOU SAY:** "A colourful album, a well-executed concept, and a shining example of everything great about Dream Theater and prog." — **Jesse Lang**

## 79 ELP
## ELP

*(ISLAND, 1970)*

**WE SAY:** Although dominated by solo pieces by Emerson and Lake, the prog behemoths' debut was audacious, cohesive and a scintillating glimpse of the majesty to come.
**YOU SAY:** "The band's first ever studio album is by far and away one of their very best. Fearless, and very nearly flawless." — **James Tilby**

## 78 Still Life
## VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

(Charisma, 1976)

**WE SAY:** The second album from the reformed Van Der Graaf Generator, *Still Life* was a fearless voyage into cerebral territory, replete with synapse-frazzling epics and suffocating disquiet.
**YOU SAY:** "The dark poetry on this album makes me anxious about facing tomorrow, but gives relief to that feeling with the final track." — **Greg Davis**

PRESS

Sonja Kristina

**Pink Floyd *Ummagumma*** *(HARVEST, 1969)*
"As world consciousness expanded and progressive music began stirring, we didn't call it prog then. To us, it was just great music. A central hive for the mystical, musical generation was the UFO club in London where Pink Floyd created rock soundscapes. We listened to *Careful With That Axe, Eugene* in our bedsits and *Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun* at our festival swarmings. When I look back, Pink Floyd were my kind of prog - spacey, edgy, the sound of rock really awakening."

## 77 Crime Of The Century
## SUPERTRAMP

*(A&M, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** There were hits — *Dreamer* and *Bloody Well Right* — but there were also strident flights of exploratory fancy to absorb on this artful but elegant slab of polished rock.
**YOU SAY:** "It features so many quality songs. It backs up its status by supplying the most songs to any Supertramp 'best of' release!" — **Davie**

## 76 Songs From The Wood
## JETHRO TULL

*(CHRYSALIS, 1977)*

**WE SAY:** Jethro Tull's folk credentials were never in doubt, but on this sublime forest frolic, Ian Anderson dived headfirst into windswept pastoral whimsy like a man who was truly possessed.
**YOU SAY:** "Not the most famous Tull album but I think it has their best songwriting and a unique sound, blending English rock and Irish folk." — **Mark Feldman**

## 75 Free Hand
## GENTLE GIANT

*(CHRYSALIS, 1976)*

**WE SAY:** The GG boys were on fire by this point, revelling in ongoing metamorphosis and delighting in their own crazed levels of invention. A prescient, pin-sharp triumph.
**YOU SAY:** "Never one of the easiest of groups to get into, merely by way of their sheer, dazzling musical ability, and yet when you hear something like *On Reflection*, you're instantly smitten." — **Natalie White**

## 74 Hot Rats
## FRANK ZAPPA

*(REPRISE, 1969)*

**WE SAY:** Prog was just building up a head of steam when Zappa demonstrated his towering genius with this fusion-fuelled masterwork. Like the man himself, it exists in a world of its own.
**YOU SAY:** "*Hot Rats* certainly defined eclectic, obscure, raw musicianship to the fullest." — **Jeremy Gatten**

## 73 Godbluff
## VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

*(CHARISMA, 1975)*

**WE SAY:** A strong contender for the

Van Der Graaf Generator diehards' favourite album, *Godbluff* indicated a fervent mutating of the band's brooding, limitless sound. It still gives us chills.
**YOU SAY:** "The very first album by Van der Graaf Generator that I ever heard. It totally blew my mind." — **Patrick Tierney**

## 72 Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band
### THE BEATLES

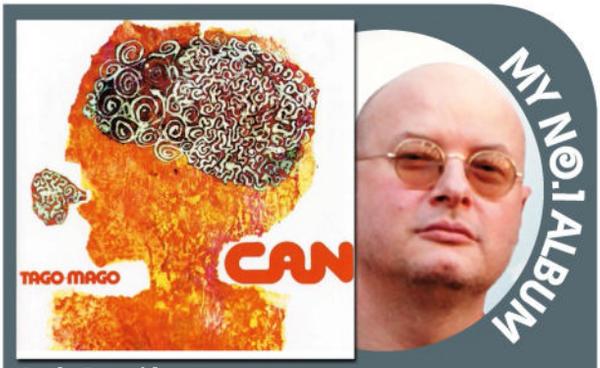
*(PARLOPHONE, 1967)*
**WE SAY:** The first prog album? Quite possibly. A stone-cold classic? Most certainly. Everyone knows The Beatles' classic *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* forwards *and* backwards because its songs are both immaculate and timeless.
**YOU SAY:** "*Sgt. Pepper's*... is surely the jumping-off point for all progressive music." — **Russell Whitworth**

## 71 Atom Heart Mother
### PINK FLOYD

*(EMI, 1970)*
**WE SAY:** Despite being a band in transition from psychedelia to something sharper and more devastating, Floyd's fifth album demonstrated their uniqueness and verve.
**YOU SAY:** "Prog rock does some pretty amazing stuff with an orchestra on the title track. The rest of the album didn't quite live up to that song, but it was still good enough to get to No.1 in the UK. And as for that cover..." — **Hamilton Teague**

## 70 Discipline
### KING CRIMSON

*(E.G., 1981)*
**WE SAY:** When Robert Fripp, Tony Levin, Bill Bruford and Adrian Belew joined forces, the results were destined to sparkle. *Discipline* is lithe, smart and in thrall to the groove.
**YOU SAY:** "It's an engaging blend of progressive rock and more new-wave sensibilities." — **Tyler Jobson**




Andy Partridge

**Can *Tago Mago*** *(UNITED ARTISTS, 1971)*
"Can were as prog as you like, in the very best sense of the word, beautifully avoiding the juvenile elephant trap that most prog bands fell into. Nobody can tell you what a Can song is really about. That's part of the magic - it's a journey like no other, as Can are a band like no other. Disc two *really* walks you into Hades and shouldn't be attempted on anything stronger than an aspirin. Look, don't start me, I could talk about this record all night, but I'm going to keep the light on after I listen to it."

PRESS

## 69 Permanent Waves
### RUSH

*(MERCURY, 1980)*
**WE SAY:** A new decade meant a new sound and new outlook for the Canadian legends. From the ageless *The Spirit Of Radio* to the epic *Natural Science*, this was an exquisite rebirth for Rush.
**YOU SAY:** "Is it the perfect transition album between what would become old Rush and where the band would then go? Some might claim others around this time are, but I think this is the one." — **Ian Clarke**

## 68 Rock Bottom
### ROBERT WYATT

*(VIRGIN, 1974)*
**WE SAY:** A magical successor to the frivolous *The End Of An Ear*, Robert Wyatt's unique voice nestled into dreamy prog soundscapes and refined melodic haze with spine-tingling results.
**YOU SAY:** "If Pink Floyd brought me a whole new world of music, Robert Wyatt introduced me to its fuzzy edges. I had no idea what Wyatt was doing or how he was doing it, moving from the delicacy of *Sea Song* to the palindromic weirdness of *Little Red Riding Hood Hit The Road*, but whatever it was, it was unlike anything else." — **Debbie McKay**

## 67 Insurgentes
### STEVEN WILSON

*(KSCOPE, 2008)*
**WE SAY:** A solo artist at last, the modern era's premier prog icon dived into shadowy post-punk and crunching electronica for this miraculous debut Tree-less voyage.
**YOU SAY:** "With Porcupine Tree at their peak, Steven Wilson combined classic progressive sounds with darker fare from the likes of the Cocteau Twins and The Cure. Unique and evocative." — **Paolo Pagnani**

## 66 In Absentia
### PORCUPINE TREE

*(LAVA, 2002)*
**WE SAY:** Steven Wilson's association with Opeth nudged his own band into heavier territory for this flawless opus, but the riffs underpinned some of his finest songs.
**YOU SAY:** "Steve Wilson and co really hit their stride with this album. Following nicely on from *Stupid Dream* and *Lightbulb Sun*, *In Absentia* ramps up the intensity and has a darker, harder edge. Modern progressive rock of the highest order." — **John Stott**

## 65 Octopus
### GENTLE GIANT

*(VERTIGO, 1972)*
**WE SAY:** Arguably the defining album in the GG story, *Octopus* was intricate and mischievous; the sound of British prog going forcefully against the grain.
**YOU SAY:** "From the band that made complexity a trademark while still producing some touching pop/prog songs, this is the creative best from an impressive catalogue." — **Andrew Bachell**

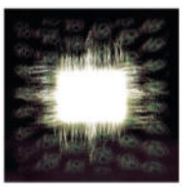
## 64 Operation: Mindcrime
### QUEENSRŸCHE

*(EMI AMERICA, 1988)*
**WE SAY:** A prog classic *and* a metal masterpiece, Queensrÿche dissected

American society with a gleaming sonic scalpel and didn't forget to pack in a shitload of sublime tunes.
**YOU SAY:** "I struggle to recall when a concept album was delivered with such precision and clarity. The story just draws you in and despite the musical complexity, it really rocks." — **Caren Jevvers**

## 63 The Parallax II: Future Sequence
## BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

*(METAL BLADE, 2012)*
**WE SAY:** Mind-bending extremity collides with a ferocious prog sensibility on this sprawling celebration of freewheeling sound and fury from Between The Buried And Me. Modern prog at its most demented.
**YOU SAY:** "Where to start with this album? Lyrically, I haven't listened to an album that is better than *The Parallax II*. Tommy Rogers does a perfect job in telling the story. As you can expect with BTBAM, this album is also incredibly epic and powerful." — **Connor Boylan**



## 62 Ænima
## TOOL

*(ZOO ENTERTAINMENT, 1996)*
**YOU SAY:** The album that defined the cantankerous prog metal crew's sound once and for all, Ænima was dense, dark, subversive and brave. An esoteric gem.
**YOU SAY:** "Tool have gone on to make some amazing albums since *Ænima*, but this is the one that started my love affair with the band and this is the one I'll always love most." — **Sandy Jackson**

Tim Elsenburg

**Sonic Youth *Sister*** *(SST, 1987)*
"Prog music's always been about imagination – unfettered by convention, fuelled by curiosity – becoming innovation: Crimson's *Red*, Björk's *Debut*. Crikey, even Public Enemy's *Fear Of A Black Planet* felt as progressive to me in 1990 as [Roxy Music's] *For Your Pleasure* seemed to some in 1973. It spoke a new language. I first witnessed Sonic Youth's alien belch on their album *Sister*. The guitar utterly reinvented, reclaimed, repurposed, even. Chaos and structure dropped into a sack, left until it stopped twitching and blood soaked through the hessian. Songs, then, but in thrilling, as-yet-unnamed shapes. A genuinely joyful, ugly-beautiful noise."

FUTURE

Steve Hillage

**Jimi Hendrix *Electric Ladyland*** *(POLYDOR, 1968)*
"Maybe not considered by some to be prog if using a narrow definition, but for me this is about as progressive as you can get. This album, together with its two predecessors – *Axis: Bold As Love* and *Are You Experienced* – had a profound effect on me that endures powerfully to this day. It covers the whole spectrum of innovative recording techniques, long, conceptual tracks and interstellar musicianship. Wow!"

FUTURE

## 61 De-loused In The Comatorium
## THE MARS VOLTA

*(UNIVERSAL, 2003)*
**WE SAY:** A stunning debut by maverick, genre-mincing alt-rock oddballs The Mars Volta, this weird, wild ride through prog, punk, jazz and funk showcased a potent new musical force.
**YOU SAY:** "I could have picked any one of the first four Mars Volta albums. Cedric's whacked-out lyrics, the meandering Omar riffs... Crazy, crazy, crazy!" — **David Cable**

## 60 Tubular Bells
## MIKE OLDFIELD

*(VIRGIN, 1973)*
**WE SAY:** Mike Oldfield's groundbreaking debut album. It's one of the most recognised and celebrated albums of the era, and it became a cornerstone of 1970s music.
**YOU SAY:** "Whenever I listen to this album, I still can't get my head around a young kid with such ability to create and make such mesmerisingly beautiful music. Absolutely stunning. A true one-off original." — **Mike Landsberry**

## 59 Weather Systems
## ANATHEMA

*(KSCOPE, 2012)*
**WE SAY:** Released in 2012, *Weather Systems* was Anathema's ninth album and it was created to emotionally move the listener. The depth and quality of the record ensured it elevated the band's status.
**YOU SAY:** "Anyone who ever tells you that progressive music is soulless, or merely substance over style, has clearly never heard Anathema. And they've never been quite as emotive as they are on *Weather Systems*." — **Jill Reading**

## 58 Moon-madness
## CAMEL

*(GAMA/DECCA, 1976)*
**WE SAY:** Camel's 1976 album. Not only the last to feature the band's original line-up, but also a highly personal album, as each track is based around one member's personality.
**YOU SAY:** "Camel's most accessible and musical album. Following hard on the heels of the epic *The Snow Goose*, *Moonmadness* is actually more loaded, progressive and complex than its predecessor. A must for any prog fan." — **Carl Coppage**

## 57 Crack The Skye
## MASTODON

*(REPRISE, 2009)*
**WE SAY:** Mastodon's 2009 album, it has the blood and thunder from previous releases, but takes everything to a new musical level. A restive and sophisticated piece of work from the prog heavyweights.
**YOU SAY:** "A brilliantly executed concept album that leaves the band's harsher metal sound behind and fully immerses itself in fresh progressive waters. A total triumph." — **Mike Edwards**

# 56 Acquiring The Taste

## GENTLE GIANT

*(VERTIGO, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Gentle Giant's second album from 1971. Out went the blues and soul taste of their debut and in came more exhaustive career-defining experimentation.

**YOU SAY:** "Gentle Giant's most interesting album in some respects: weird R&B elements, early heavy metal touches and strange, jazzy, cacophonous vocal harmonies all mix together uneasily, yet with curious, compelling force." **— Ragna Rok**

# 55 Journey To The Centre Of The Earth

## RICK WAKEMAN

*(A&M, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** Rick Wakeman's unique perspective on the classic Jules Verne novel. Released as a live album in 1974, and revisited in the studio last year.

**YOU SAY:** "It's a live album but you never think of it as being a live album. Rick's mastery of creating wonderful sonic vistas to accompany and propel his story are quite fantastic." **— Jacques Favalier**

# 54 The Mountain

## HAKEN

*(INSIDEOUT, 2013)*

**WE SAY:** Haken's third album elevated the band's status as they showed a capacity for individual expression that had a charismatic cohesion.

**YOU SAY:** "Haken burst on to the scene a few years ago and showed everyone that the genre wasn't dead. With a dash more humour and more 70s influences than many others, they really are one of the best bands around today!" **— Auguste Nahas**

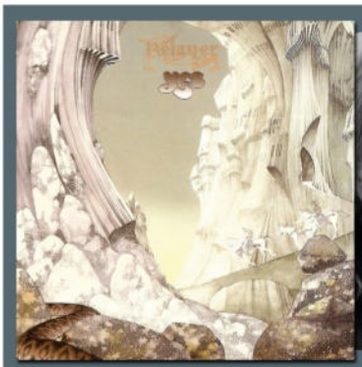
# 53 A Farewell To Kings

## RUSH

*(MERCURY, 1977)*

**WE SAY:** Rush's 1977 album saw the band moving on from *2112*, its predecessor. The cosmic reach was still there, but the trio were now expanding their musical and lyrical horizons.

**YOU SAY:** "Rush at their progressive peak, combining rich, lyrical passages and emphatically far-reaching musicality, such as on *Xanadu*, as well as displaying a penchant for being able to wrap everything up in a delightfully nice little package, such as on *Closer To The Heart*." **— Michel Agasee**



MY NO.1 ALBUM

## Adam Holzman

***Yes Relayer*** *(ATLANTIC, 1974)*

"Prog rock is about creative and unusual combinations of riffs, songs, solos, quiet sections, loud sections, even jumps between whole styles of music. The more seamless the material, the stronger the statement. Yes, in their prime, were very cohesive. This record combines some of Yes' strongest songwriting with arguably their jazziest and most experimental music. *Relayer* was a step beyond what almost anyone was doing at the time, and it still points to some unexplored possibilities. I always go back to this album. Patrick Moraz' Minimoog solo on *Sound Chaser* is one of the all-time jazz-rock classics."

DIANA NITSCHKE/PRESS

# 52 Marbles

## MARILLION

*(RACKET, 2004)*

**WE SAY:** Marillion's 2004 exercise in laying bare their love of Pink Floyd, while also striding formidably into the 21st century. Erudite, rousing , massively entertaining and almost a career changer.

**YOU SAY:** "An album that in its dual format is even better, with finely progressive contributions such as *The Invisible Man, Ocean Cloud* and *Neverland*, as well as more immediate moments, such as *You're Gone*." **— Francisco Hernández**

# 51 Mirage

## CAMEL

*(GAMA/DERAM, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** This was only Camel's second album yet *Mirage* features some of the band's best-loved songs, and created an atmosphere of peculiarly English eccentricity that was to become their hallmark.

**YOU SAY:** "The cover to this lovely album drew me in, and I don't even smoke! And the epic *Lady Fantasy* reduces me to tears almost every single time. Terrific stuff." **— Jane Shepherd**

# 50 Grace For Drowning

## STEVEN WILSON

*(KSCOPE, 2011)*

**WE SAY:** Steven Wilson's second solo album was an expression of joy for what could be done in an album format, the fullest representation of musical freedom. It even got a Grammy nomination.

**YOU SAY:** "In my humble opinion, the best of Steven's solo output to date. He humbly says it's just songs about trains and serial killers, but to my mind it's so much better than that." **— Rebecca Lancaster**

# 49 A Passion Play

## JETHRO TULL

*(CHRYSALIS, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** Jethro Tull's sixth album was conceptual, based around one person's journey in the afterlife, conceived as a play. Bold and theatrical.

**YOU SAY:** "I know a lot of people who don't like this album, but they seem to base that on the fact that it followed up the brilliant *Thick As A Brick*. I've always loved the music, the concept and especially *The Story Of The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles*." **— Mike Blackburn**

# 48 The Incident

## PORCUPINE TREE

*(ROADRUNNER, 2009)*

**WE SAY:** Released in 2009, this album got Porcupine Tree a Grammy nomination. It's essentially one sub-divided track, proving the band were still refusing to be predicable.

**YOU SAY:** "My gateway to real prog. I've always been a fan of mainstream prog, but this band slung me deep into it.

BRAM BELLONI/PRESS

## Gary Lucas

**Pink Floyd *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*** *(EMI, 1969)*
"This album so took hold of my adolescent consciousness when I purchased it in August '67 that I can play it over and over to this day and never get bored with it – largely due to Syd Barrett's astounding contributions and presence, which looms monolithically over the entire landscape of English psychedelia. Speaking as a guitarist, his slashing, swooning attack in tandem with his Binson Echorec is a total joy, and an influence on my *Otherworld* project with Peter Hammill. I prefer the UK version with *Astronomy Domine*, *Flaming* and *Bike*, three songs inexplicably left off the US album."

They are how I found *Prog* mag and many other great bands." — **Jeff Brousseau**

## 47 Clutching At Straws **MARILLION**

*(EMI, 1987)*
**WE SAY:** Marillion's final album with Fish. The record is conceptual, based on the despondent character of Torch. A darkly depressing yet spellbinding work. A landmark.
**YOU SAY:** "Their last album with Fish but the one with him the resonates the best with me. *Misplaced Childhood* may have been more successful but I find the songs here far more emotive and powerful." — **Liv Peters**

## 46 Ghost Reveries **OPETH**

*(ROADRUNNER, 2005)*
**WE SAY:** Released in 2005, this was a partially conceptual album, with Satanism as its theme. It's now regarded as one of the defining albums of 21st-century progressive metal.
**YOU SAY:** "This may be my favourite metal album of all time and its array of different musical elements and ideas gives it a well-deserved home in the annals of prog history too. Opeth brought a much heavier approach to their songwriting, blending really heavy death metal elements with lighter folk-tinged passages and, later on, full-on prog-rock freak-outs." — **Dean Barrett**

## 45 Colors **BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME**

(Victory, 2007)
**WE SAY:** Between The Buried And Me found their range and musical mobility here. Aside from metal, it has influences from jazz and pop. It's an album that encompasses differing styles but has an irresistible dynamic.
**YOU SAY:** "Many people say that music nowadays just isn't 'good'. This album proves them all wrong, showing that modern prog can be even more sophisticated, technical, melodic and obscure than its predecessors. It's the most successful blend of extreme metal, jazz, pop and even country that I have ever heard." — **Shintaro**

## 44 Wind & Wuthering **GENESIS**

*(CHARISMA, 1976)*
**WE SAY:** The album that marked the end of another era for Genesis. It was Steve Hackett's farewell, and the band seamlessly straddled commerciality and progression.
**YOU SAY:** "A very underrated album. A melancholy, autumnal feel and the best of Collins-era Genesis." — **John Goldthorpe**

ROB MONK/FUTURE

## Judy Dyble

**Phil Ochs *Pleasures Of The Harbor*** *(A&M, 1967)*
"This might seem an odd choice as the greatest prog record, but here he paints pictures using string quartets and harpsichords and the jazziest bands. The words are both fearsome, sad and true, songs of fierceness and irony, the pianist playing on through the disasters of *The Party*, the closed ears and eyes of *Outside Of A Small Circle Of Friends* and culminating in the magnificent eight-minute track *The Crucifixion*. An album that was like no other in its day, using unusual instruments, foreshadowing the use of classical instrumentation that became such a part of the whole progressive movement."

## 43 Aqualung **JETHRO TULL**

*(CHRYSALIS, 1971)*
**YOU SAY:** The 'no, it's not a bloody concept album' album from Jethro Tull. It remains the band's biggest and most acclaimed record, and it's stuffed with classics like *Locomotive Breath* and *Cross-Eyed Mary*.
**YOU SAY:** "Some songs are heart-achingly beautiful, some songs make you want to grab your guitar and play along. An album full of inspiration and nostalgia." — **Laura Tolvanen**

## 42 Trilogy **ELP**

*(ISLAND, 1972)*
**WE SAY:** ELP ran the gamut from classical to folk and country on their third album. It spun a virtuoso web around well-defined, easily accessible themes. More pomp than pompous.
**YOU SAY:** "Can't exclude this one. It has meant so much to me over the years and songs like *The Endless Enigma* and *Trilogy* showed the fantastic dynamic, solemn and diversified sides of the band." — **Emil Mickols**

## 41 Nursery Cryme **GENESIS**

*(CHARISMA, 1971)*
**WE SAY:** The first Genesis album with what many would regard as the classic line-up. Imaginatively structured, songs like *The Musical Box* and *The Fountain Of Salmacis* are rightly deemed classics.
**YOU SAY:** "*The Musical Box* has a lot to do with *Nursery Cryme*'s place on this list. Genesis know how to create enormously dynamic pieces and nothing exemplifies that more than *The Musical Box*." — **Kyle Nations**

## 40 Script For A Jester's Tear **MARILLION**

*(EMI, 1983)*

**WE SAY:** The debut album from Marillion, it not only set the band on the path to success, but it also crystallised the entire neo-prog gathering and gave it momentum.
**YOU SAY:** "Like many of these bands, it's hard to choose just one album. *Script...* gets the edge because of the musical climate at the time it was made." **— Tad Spencer**

## 39 The Whirlwind
### TRANSATLANTIC

*(INSIDEOUT, 2009)*

**WE SAY:** The third album from Transatlantic brought the foursome's finest attributes to the fore. It's essentially one track, divided into a diverse series of movements.
**YOU SAY:** "One 70-plus-minute masterpiece. A great achievement and a great step forward in epic prog compositions. Like a symphony, this piece starts with a proper overture and then proceeds to develop the many and varied themes before climaxing with yet another perfect storm." **— John Moffitt**

## 38 English Electric: Full Power
### BIG BIG TRAIN

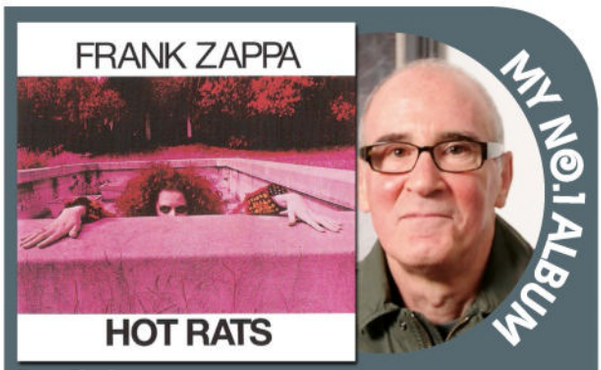
*(GEP, 2013)*

**WE SAY:** Big Big Train released this double album as two separate records. *Part One* came out in 2012, with *Part Two* the next year. It adds up to some of the most enchanting and rigorous music on any recent albums.
**YOU SAY:** "The most perfectly crafted, inspired and engaging double album of tremendous songs of the new prog generation. It's full of supremely interesting playing and clever lyrics." **— David Vickers**

## 37 Meddle
### PINK FLOYD

*(HARVEST, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Pink Floyd's 1971 album was a genuine band collaboration. Much of it was born from spontaneity, and the epic *Echoes* is a masterpiece.
**YOU SAY:** "Containing one of the best prog instrumentals and another classic prog epic, but balanced with quirky songs like *Seamus* and *San Tropez*, this album was a slap to the face of conventionalism." **— Tony Entrekin**




TIMA KORHONEN/PRESS

Ray Shulman

**Frank Zapp a *Hot Rats*** *(REPRISE, 1969)*
"It came out in 1969, the year we were planning Gentle Giant. It was the combination of great musicianship, smart arrangements and the lack of pomposity that hooked me. Where early European prog albums, such as [King Crimson's] *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, were classically biased, even though a big influence on early Gentle Giant, it was the jazz setting of *Hot Rats* that appealed the most. Still a great album."

## 36 Blackwater Park
### OPETH

*(MUSIC FOR NATIONS, 2001)*

**WE SAY:** *Blackwater Park* was Opeth's watershed album, marking a firm step away from extreme metal towards more progressive inclinations. Co-produced by Steven Wilson, it set the tone for what the band have done since.
**YOU SAY:** "Ethereal and brooding, this album shows that prog can be crushingly heavy and still be sophisticated." **— Regan Fox**

## 35 In The Land Of Grey And Pink
### CARAVAN

*(DERAM, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Still considered to be their best work. It has all their musical attributes honed to a fine focus, plus the underlying humour that's endeared them to so many.
**YOU SAY:** "Often hidden underneath *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, this album is a perfect slice of the warmth and whimsy in classic British prog. The organ solos on this album make it what it is." **— Ian James**

## 34 Bridge Across Forever
### TRANSATLANTIC

*(INSIDEOUT, 2001)*

**WE SAY:** Released in 2001, this was progressive rock supergroup Transatlantic's second album. Each member of the band contributed to the compositions, and the lengthy pieces allow the musicianship to truly breathe.
**YOU SAY:** "The opening and closing tracks from this album are enough to put it in my Top 10 list. Neal Morse is my favourite vocalist, and his voice fits perfectly with the band. The title track is a shorter melody, about five minutes, and it's a wonderful acoustic ballad. Mike Portnoy's crazy drumming makes this high up on my list of best prog albums. *Stranger In Your Soul* is also one of the most-played songs on my iPhone. I never get tired of this album!" **— Fredrik Klepper Eriksen**

## 33 Lateralus
### TOOL

*(VOLCANO ENTERTAINMENT, 2001)*

**WE SAY:** Tool's third album saw them redefine the notion of progressive music for a raft of younger bands. This was art-rock without any frontiers or self-interest, and the music itself represented the band's far-reaching philosophy.
**YOU SAY:** "At the darker end of the spectrum, this band really explode with energy and creativity." **— Jeroen Henstra**

## 32 The Yes Album
### YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Steve Howe made his Yes debut on this 1971 album. It's the record that broke the band and gave us such timeless songs as *Yours Is No Disgrace* and *Starship Trooper*.
**YOU SAY:** "Whereas Floyd took seven albums to get to their defining work of genius on *The Dark Side...*, Yes managed it on their third. The track list includes many of their best-remembered and still-performed songs. For me, it beats *Fragile* on that basis — and it came first!" **— Chris Tucker**

## 31 Music Inspired By The Snow Goose
### CAMEL

*(GAMA/DECCA, 1975)*

**WE SAY:** Camel based this 1975 album on Paul Gallico's World War II novel *The Snow Goose*. The band scrapped the idea of using lyrics based on the book, going instead for instrumental passages — which was an evocative and inspired move.

**YOU SAY:** "The perfect marriage of rock and classical music, tireless melodies that I never tire of, and the album that introduced me to progressive rock." **— Paul Millington**

## 30 Larks' Tongues In Aspic
### KING CRIMSON

*(ISLAND, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** King Crimson's fifth album *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* saw them introduce different sounds, such as sheet metal and mbira. It marked a transition as the band began exhaustively reaching beyond their jazz-rock influences.

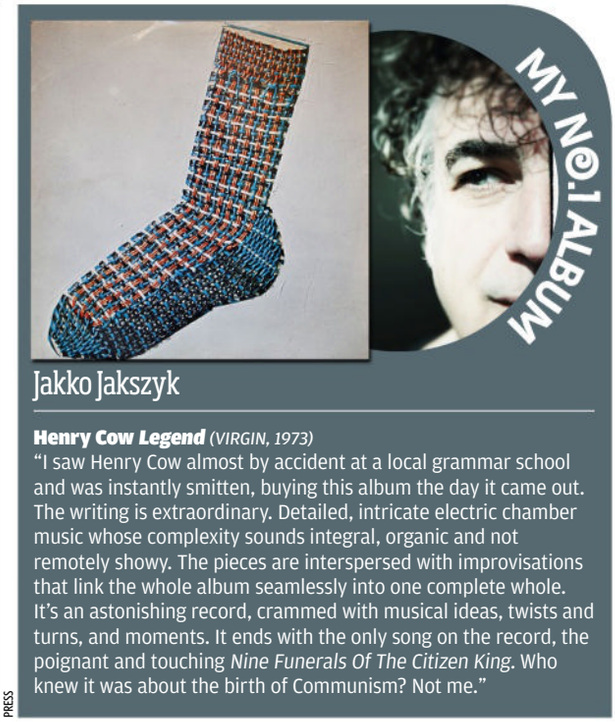
**YOU SAY:** "The best Crimson album of the 1970s, which introduced both Bill Bruford and John Wetton into the band to stunning effect. Bookended by the title track, split into two parts, there's plenty of free-form jazz-rockery, which at times borders on heavy metal, but there are some good melodies as well. *Book Of Saturday* has a wistful, romantic feel, which is quite refreshing for Fripp and co, and the balance of light and shade, subtlety and intensity, is spot on. Way ahead of its time, and cool cover art too." **— John Stott**

## 29 Brave
### MARILLION

*(EMI, 1994)*

**WE SAY:** Released in 1994, this was Marillion going right back to their progressive roots, on a concept album about a lost girl trying to recall her past. It's haunting, atmospheric and denseley textured.

**YOU SAY:** "An excellent progressive masterpiece, telling a complete story, as the music twists and turns with the adventure. Some wonderful moody elements, with the final section (especially *Brave* and *The Great Escape*) being one of the most evocative pieces of music I think that has ever been written. I've even grown to like *Paper Lies*!" **— Charles**




PRESS

### Jakko Jakszyk

**Henry Cow *Legend*** *(VIRGIN, 1973)*

"I saw Henry Cow almost by accident at a local grammar school and was instantly smitten, buying this album the day it came out. The writing is extraordinary. Detailed, intricate electric chamber music whose complexity sounds integral, organic and not remotely showy. The pieces are interspersed with improvisations that link the whole album seamlessly into one complete whole. It's an astonishing record, crammed with musical ideas, twists and turns, and moments. It ends with the only song on the record, the poignant and touching *Nine Funerals Of The Citizen King*. Who knew it was about the birth of Communism? Not me."

## 28 Tarkus
### ELP

*(ISLAND, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** Emerson, Lake & Palmer's second album was perfectly represented by the cover artwork. Musically, it was a unique fusion of ideas and musical ideologies, from the sprawling title track to the more concise *Jeremy Bender*.

**YOU SAY:** "Baroque classic prog rock that proves that Keith Emerson was a genius. A strong, working band, and a wonderful masterpiece of 20 minutes where rock standards meet classic variations." **— Jacobo Celnik**

## 27 Deadwing
### PORCUPINE TREE

*(LAVA, 2005)*

**WE SAY:** Porcupine Tree's 2005 album *Deadwing* is a ghost story based on a screenplay that was co-written by Steven Wilson and Mike Bennion. It's a surreal, sensitive and subtle experience and a triumph for artistic instinct.

**YOU SAY:** "A difficult choice from Steven Wilson's vast output, but *Deadwing* is PT at their most consistent. *Arriving Somewhere...* still defines their sound perfectly." **— David Edwards**

## 26 Going For The One
### YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1977)*

**WE SAY:** The 1977 return for Yes after a three-year absence. Their eighth album had a strong collection of songs, that was arguably the band's best in several years. A firm response to the changing music scene.

**YOU SAY:** "From the opening notes of the title track to the lush keyboards of *Awaken*, it's a glorious ride." **— Kevin Stephenson**

## 25 Images And Words
### DREAM THEATER

*(ATCO, 1992)*

**WE SAY:** Three years after their debut, Dream Theater returned with their second album *Images And Words*. The success of *Pull Me Under* in particular laid the foundations for the success to come.

**YOU SAY:** "This album is where it all came together. With a singer who reaches high and has a Bruce Dickinson kinda layering, plus a Neil Peart-infused drummer, and bass and guitar shredders, John Myung and John Petrucci wrote some technical songs with tricky time signatures and took it all to a new level with that metal edge." **— Nick Kuhl**

## 24 Pawn Hearts
### VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

*(CHARISMA, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** The fourth album from Van Der Graaf Generator, this was originally going to be a double album. Sadly it was eventually reduced in length to this single record with *A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers* an absolute Van Der Graaf Generator gem.

**YOU SAY:** "The darker side of prog. Peter Hammill (still) has one of the great voices of prog, or indeed any genre." **— Mark Harding**

# 23 Hemispheres
## RUSH

*(MERCURY, 1978)*

**WE SAY:** The 1978 album from Rush represents the end of the fantasy and sci-fi imagery for the band. *Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres* is the conclusion of a story that began at the end of *A Farewell To Kings*.

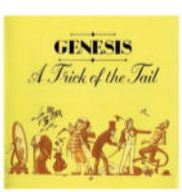
**YOU SAY:** "*Hemispheres* is the quintessential Rush album. *2112* has amazing highs — dare I say higher than *Hemispheres*. However, the lows do sometimes get a lot lower. *Hemispheres* is totally consistent throughout and showcases everything that Rush do best. The virtuosity is mind-boggling, the vocals have to be heard to be believed, the conceptual work is very thoughtful, and *La Villa Strangiato* is, quite simply put, the best instrumental they ever did." **— Tristan Zaba**

# 22 Tales From Topographic Oceans
## YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** Yes' 1973 double album is seen by some as overindulgent. But with a concept based on Jon Anderson's understanding of selected Hindu scriptures, it's now considered to feature some of Yes' finest, most lovingly crafted moments.

**YOU SAY:** "When I first heard it I was transfixed not only by the music but also by the cover — the little pictures of lanes disappearing into the mist fired my imagination, as did the music itself for me, as a 14-year-old. I haven't tired of playing it now, nearly 40 years later." **— Terry Johnson**




# 21 A Trick Of The Tail
## GENESIS

*(CHARISMA, 1976)*

**WE SAY:** The first Genesis album following Peter Gabriel's departure, this 1976 release is stuffed with brilliantly observed songs, proving the band could more than cope with the loss of their frontman.

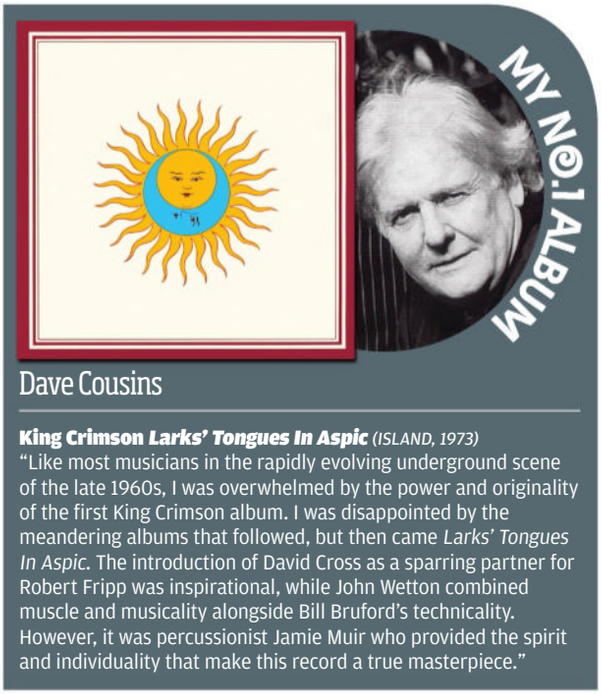
**YOU SAY:** "Such an underrated album — it may be the best symphonic/eclectic prog album of all time. No waste, no filler, good production values. Every track is five stars." **— Andrew Korty**

# 20 Misplaced Childhood
## MARILLION

*(EMI, 1985)*

**WE SAY:** The ultimate triumph of the 80s neo-prog revival in the UK was Marillion hitting the Number One spot in the album charts with this wonderfully flowing conceptual piece that also managed the no-mean-feat of containing two bona fide hit singles as well - a Number Two and Five no less. Pretty much unheard of for any prog band of any era! Without a doubt their commercial peak.

**YOU SAY:** "A brave choice to release a full-blown concept album in the middle of the 80s, yet it was immensely successful both commercially and artistically. Steve Rothery, take a bow." **— Philip Briddon**




PRESS

## Dave Cousins

***King Crimson Larks' Tongues In Aspic*** *(ISLAND, 1973)*

"Like most musicians in the rapidly evolving underground scene of the late 1960s, I was overwhelmed by the power and originality of the first King Crimson album. I was disappointed by the meandering albums that followed, but then came *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*. The introduction of David Cross as a sparring partner for Robert Fripp was inspirational, while John Wetton combined muscle and musicality alongside Bill Bruford's technicality. However, it was percussionist Jamie Muir who provided the spirit and individuality that make this record a true masterpiece."

# 19 Relayer
## YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** Wakeman was out and Swiss keyboard wizard Patrick Moraz was in. We doubt there was the kind of 'No Jon, No Yes' kerfuffle that surrounds the band's revolving door policy with members today, though. The fact is that on *Relayer*, the band exercised their jazz chops like never before.

**YOU SAY:** "This record had me believing that Yes were actually aliens as a teenager. There was no way humans conceived this or are playing it live!" **— Jeff Wagner**

# 18 Fear Of A Blank Planet
## PORCUPINE TREE

*(ROADRUNNER, 2007)*

**WE SAY:** A fittingly high placing for Porcupine Tree, arguably one of the major reasons why progressive music has retained such popularity. With this album, Steven Wilson's creative surge finally began reaping commercial dividends, propelling himself and the band into the UK Top 40 for the first time.

**YOU SAY:** "This is what happens when a thoughtful and powerful songwriter hits a career peak and he happens to have one of the greatest drummers of all time on board. There's no stopping this freight train. Arguably the best prog-rock release this century, this album is technical but not flashy, heavy but not overly metal, dark but with light and shade, rhythmic but with melodic content that rewards visit after blissful visit." **— Russell Hanna**

# 17 Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes From A Memory
## DREAM THEATER

*(ELEKTRA, 1999)*

**WE SAY:** Back in 2012, *Rolling Stone* magazine voted this album, the band's fifth, as the best prog rock album of all time. Our more discerning readers haven't afforded it such an accolade, but it's still Dream Theater's highest-charting album in the only poll that matters!

**YOU SAY:** "To me, this is the peak of classical prog metal: the perfect balance between mind-bending technique, complex composition and melodies that will stick with you. Objectively speaking, perhaps the best prog album after the 70s." **— Markus Wierschem**

# 16 The Wall
## PINK FLOYD

*(HARVEST, 1979)*

**WE SAY:** Ambitious in scope, slightly overblown and perhaps veering towards the paranoid — all things that help make *The Wall* one of the greatest double concept albums of all time. A quite stunning realisation of Roger Waters' vision that works because

(most of) the band were still working well together.
**YOU SAY:** "*The Wall* is an epic musical journey that explores the emotional bonds and barriers of human beings, with the band's technical prowess and Roger Waters' venomous lyrics highlighting every nuance of the story." **— Vanessa Risti**

## 15 2112 RUSH

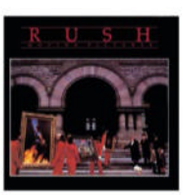
*(MERCURY, 1976)*

**WE SAY:** This was the album that was most likely to have introduced legions of young heavy rock fans to the appeal of progressive music. The side one-long conceptual piece *2112* remains one of the Canadian trio's best-loved songs. The shorter material on side two still holds up as well.
**YOU SAY:** "*2112* itself is an incredibly well-written and executed composition, a good story and, musically, a masterpiece of dynamics — no band has been able to repeat that since then." **— György Dragon**

## 14 Animals PINK FLOYD

*(HARVEST, 1977)*

**WE SAY:** The oft-overlooked Floyd album from the 70s earns its spurs in style, finally nestling in the all-time *Prog* Top 20 (it didn't even make the Top 50 the last time we did this!). Not bad for what David Gilmour calls the band's "punk" album, nor for a treatise against capitalism, in which Roger Waters used George Orwell's *Animal Farm* as his basis.
**YOU SAY:** "*Animals* represents the end of an era for Pink Floyd as tensions were definitely rising in the band, but this album doesn't show it. Every cut here is a thick slab of a rougher-edged Pink Floyd than was ever heard before. The harder edge and the Orwellian lyrics tick all the right boxes for me." **— Alek Nyberg**




## 13 Moving Pictures RUSH

*(MERCURY, 1981)*

**WE SAY:** Rightly considered the jewel in the Rush crown — albeit a crown festooned with sparkling gems from throughout the band's glittering 30-year career. As with many groups populating our Top 20, it's difficult to choose between so many great works, but *Moving Pictures* truly stands out as a unique classic.
**YOU SAY:** "It's the absolute best Rush album and the ultimate bridge between the 70s ambitious prog and the 80s new-wave prog." **— Diogo Salles**

## 12 Red KING CRIMSON

*(ISLAND, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** The last truly legendary King Crimson album? Some, of course, will argue with that statement. But *Red* remains so often the album this truly wonderful band created that people cite as being pretty much up there with Crimson's brilliant debut. And so it proves in our poll.
**YOU SAY:** "With this band there have been so many line-up changes, so much diversity, but with *Red*, King Crimson's best line-up went out with a bang with this dark, metallic, complex album that can be best summed up with two words: Bruford and Wetton!" **— Joshua Crease**y

## 11 Brain Salad Surgery ELP

*(MANTICORE, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** We defer to Ian Fortnam's pinpoint review back in *Prog* 45: "On paper it seems as insane as it ever did… It shouldn't work, but it does. Brilliantly." Without a doubt Emerson, Lake & Palmer's crowning glory, one can only wonder where the band might have gone had they not ended up on that three-year hiatus after the gargantuan *Brain Salad Surgery* world tour.
**YOU SAY:** "ELP were the band that first got me into prog rock. This album shows them at their peak, all of the members creating a synthesis of each of their musical ideas. From the Emerson-driven hymn at the beginning, to the epic and high-energy *Karn Evil 9* to Greg Lake's mellifluous vocals on *Still… You Turn Me On*, this album displays classic progressive rock in all its glory." **— Matthew Zucker**

FUTURE/WILL IRELAND

### Mike Portnoy

**Pink Floyd *The Wall*** *(HARVEST, 1979)*
"I have to immediately put this at the top of my list as it is my favorite album of all time (by anybody in any genre). It may not be their "prog masterpiece" (*Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here* and *Animals* are all contenders as well), but to me – this was *the* concept album that shook me to the bone. The production is so cinematic and Roger's lyrics and story so emotionally exausting that this isn't an album you just listen to… this is an album you experience!"

FUTURE

### Roine Stolt

**Jon Anderson *Olias Of Sunhillow*** *(ATLANTIC, 1976)*
"I know it was probably created in Jon's garage but it sounded like it was coming from another galaxy. The way he used synths, voices and tribal drumming is what makes all the difference. There's no over-technical, clever playing - the vibe is everything. Ancient space hymns weave in and out, Jon's voice and words in the centre. This makes the album a total standout and as fresh today as when released. It was a 12-inch plastic magic wormhole that transported me to better and more exciting worlds in the late 70s. It's simply one of a kind."

## 10 Fragile YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1971)*

**WE SAY:** The album that made Yes a truly international act rather than a cult British prog curio, thanks in no small part to the album's Top 4 placing in the Billboard chart and the massive US radio success of *Roundabout* as a single. Stadiums beckoned with open arms.
**YOU SAY:** "This album is absolutely amazing on so many levels. The writing was never really bettered, even on *Close To The Edge*. They had so many ideas and so little space, they wasted no time and it's concise to a fault. Maybe there's a little bit of filler, but even that's good. Yes were never the same without Bruford, and they made use of him here and on the next album." **— Tony Meador**

## 9 The Raven That Refused To Sing (And Other Stories)

### STEVEN WILSON

*(KSCOPE, 2013)*

**WE SAY:** The highest chart entry for one of the new breed of progressive artists who continue to spread the message of intelligently crafted rock music throughout the world. Steven Wilson's third solo album is easily his best thus far, a compact modern-day imagining of where the likes of King Crimson, Caravan, Jethro Tull, Emerson, Lake & Palmer and their ilk may have gone creatively in today's musical age, but with Wilson's own added imagination and talent driving it ever onwards.

**YOU SAY:** "An agonisingly beautiful album, with each song a masterclass in storytelling, told by virtuoso musicians at the top of their game. Out there on its own." **— David Cable**

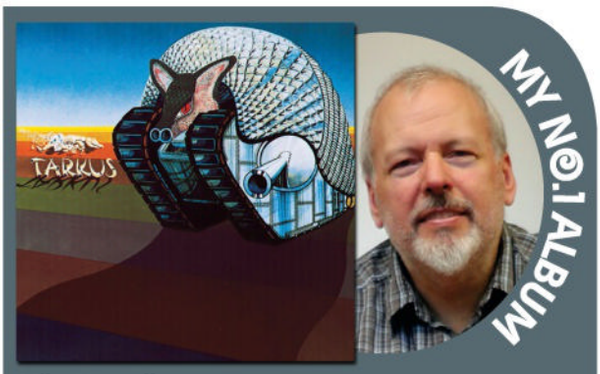
## 8 The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway

### GENESIS

*(CHARISMA, 1974)*

**WE SAY:** The last Genesis album to feature singer Peter Gabriel, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* is built around his ambitious concept, featuring young Puerto Rican Rael and his oddball adventures in a subterranean New York city with all manner of bizarre characters and creatures. On paper, it's not the easiest of concepts from Genesis for the listener to digest, but it's made easier by the wonderfully strident and majestic music they made to back it all up. One can only wonder at what delights the band might've have come up with if the oft-mooted film project had ever really gotten off the ground!

**YOU SAY:** "This is my favourite progressive rock album of all time. It was a bit of a shock to the system: the story, the music and the chord progressions were unreal when I first listened to it. It was dense and overpowering at first, but once I got it and absorbed it, it really was an absolute joy and privilege to be able to listen to music of such stunning complexity and originality. There will probably never be another album like this ever again." **— Ross Brooks**




PRESS

### Mike Keneally

**ELP *Tarkus*** *(ISLAND, 1971)*

"As a child organist, and dealing with the potential uncoolness factor thereto, hearing this album aged nine provided valuable evidence that the instrument could deliver some truly badass music. Emerson's angular, idiosyncratic composing, combined with his jaw-dropping virtuosity, are an entirely potent combination, and the crystal-clear engineering places Lake's beautiful bass work and career-best vocals, and Palmer's impressively controlled firepower, in perfect balance with Emerson's vision. The epic is fully *epic*, there's an abundance of undeniably superb music on side two, and I have zero issues with the comedy numbers. Humour from the gods should be welcomed!"

## 7 Wish You Were Here

### PINK FLOYD

*(HARVEST, 1975)*

**WE SAY:** Pink Floyd's emotive farewell to original singer Syd Barrett (among its other themes of absence and the rigours of the music business) was made all the more poignant when the reclusive Barrett actually turned up at Abbey Road during the recording session. Maybe that's why the Barrett ode *Shine On You Crazy Diamond's* strident guitar chords continue to resound so emphatically to this very day.

**YOU SAY:** "A perfect record. Probably the most played CD, record and tape in my collection. The tragic story of Syd Barrett played against the excesses of the record industry — a metaphor for commercialism and madness." **— Drew Sidener**

## 6 Foxtrot

### GENESIS

*(CHARISMA, 1972)*

**WE SAY:** It would be easy just to say *Supper's Ready*. The near 23-minute Biblically apocalyptic epic that takes up almost all of side two is now synonymous not just with Genesis but with progressive rock at its finest. Fortunately, the likes of *Watcher Of The Skies* and *Get 'Em Out By Friday* proved there was far more to the band than extensive, though truly wonderful, workouts.

**YOU SAY:** "From the foreboding opening mellotron chords of *Watcher Of The Skies* to the quirky and apocalyptic masterpiece that is *Supper's Ready* (a candidate for top prog song), this album keeps you hooked until the final note fades away — and then you want to play it again." **— Martin Reijman**

## 5 Thick As A Brick

### JETHRO TULL

*(CHRYSALIS, 1972)*

**WE SAY:** *Aqualung* wasn't a concept album, but in retaliation to those who thought it was, Ian Anderson's mercurial brain whirred into action and created the character of then eight-year old Gerald Bostock and *Thick As A Brick*, thus creating a whole new fantasy world to populate. The album's endurance is proven by the fact that Anderson has resurrected Bostock for his most recent works. A fitting muse indeed, one might say.

**YOU SAY:** "A parody of concept albums that's actually one of the best concept albums ever? Yeah, that's something only Jethro Tull can do." **— Teemu Vaskiluoto**

## 4 The Dark Side Of The Moon

### PINK FLOYD

*(HARVEST, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** The most recognisable album sleeve of all time. And quite possibly the most easily identifiable Pink Floyd-sounding album of all time, too? Either way, it was the record that catapulted the band from Cambridge into the rock hierarchy. Not bad for an album that didn't even have the band's name on the sleeve. The album topped the US charts and remained on the Billboard chart for 741 weeks, but could only reach No.2 here in the UK.

**YOU SAY:** "This is a record that just grabs hold of all of your senses when you listen to it. It scores off the charts in all categories: musicality, innovation, lyrical content, atmosphere and cohesion. The music is very accessible, but does not lack for depth or complexity — and that, to me, is what makes this a truly great album." **— Arvid Rensfeldt**

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

# 3
## Selling England By The Pound
## GENESIS

*(CHARISMA, 1973)*

**WE SAY:** It's certainly no mean feat to get three albums in our Top 10, but Genesis have managed just that. *Selling England By The Pound* topped a similar poll five years ago. Here it resides at No.3. Who's to say it won't be back in the top position in another five years' time?

**YOU SAY:** "Every track on this album, and also the album as a whole, has an incredible balance between art and entertainment. I believe that this is an album that both proggers and pop fans can enjoy as equals, and consider it a masterpiece from two opposite points of view. This kind of album would not disappoint the most perfectionist artist imaginable." **— Yuval Dolev**

# 2
## In The Court Of The Crimson King
## KING CRIMSON

*(ISLAND, 1969)*

**WE SAY:** For many, the album that kick-started the entire progressive genre, and certainly the finest prog album from those heady early days back in the 60s when inventiveness was at its peak and the musicians knew no boundaries. A time when, as Robert Fripp puts it, "The creative impulse came from young men who didn't know what they were doing, yet were able to do it."

**YOU SAY:** "This must have been by far the most experimental and progressive album of its time. It revolutionised rock music the same way that Bach revolutionised classical music. Simply a masterpiece of progress and magic (the mellotron works miracles)." **— Constantin Tsagaris**

DGM PRESS

# 1
## Close To The Edge
## YES

*(ATLANTIC, 1972)*

**WE SAY:** With seven albums in the Top 100 (that's one more than Genesis, Floyd and Marillion), it's perhaps fitting that Yes top the poll with their 1972 classic. We based a magazine cover on this album last year and, needless to say, it sold by the bucketload — a testament to the longevity of the record you've called the greatest prog album of all time. Behold, Yes and *Close To The Edge*.

**YOU SAY:** "A perfect modern symphony with three movements. I remember listening to the opening of *Close To The Edge* when I was 12 years old in 1972. My musical taste changed forever. Howe's blazing guitar intro made me look into bands like Mahavishnu Orchestra, which I had heard through my older brothers but never really paid attention to. Anderson's lyrics and vocals were the perfect pairing to the intro. I was already a Yes fan, but *Close To The Edge* made Yes my favourite band forever." **— Jorge J. Murillo**

> "First of all, I would like to thank all the Yes fans out there in "prog land" who have voted for *Close To The Edge* and six other Yes albums in this poll.
>
> As far as *Close To The Edge* is concerned, this album has obviously struck a chord in the hearts of our audience, that has endured through the years following its 1972 release and I can only surmise that the fans were attracted to the brave approach and our voyage into the realms of the long form arrangements embodied in this album."
>
> **Chris Squire**

GUISBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS/GETTY

# NOT JUST ANOTHER FACE IN THE CROWD

BUILDING | LASSE HOILE

On his album *Hand. Cannot. Erase.*, **Steven Wilson** looked to a tragic death for inspiration. But would it elevate him to mainstream fame? Just before its 2015 release, *Prog* asked this and more, delving into the details of the man behind the music – with a little help from those who know him best – in this in-depth insight into the figurehead for modern prog…

**Words:** Jerry Ewing **Portraits:** Scarlet Page

December 2003: It is a few days before Christmas. In her North London bedsit, Joyce Carol Vincent has just returned from a shopping trip in Wood Green. She turns the heating up to banish the bitter December chill and flicks on the television for some company before contemplating the wrapped Christmas presents laid out before her.

The past few years have been somewhat tumultuous for the attractive young woman of Grenadine descent. She resigned from her job working in the treasury department of well-known financiers Ernst & Young a few years prior in 2001 and had sought help following domestic abuse, spending some time in a shelter in Haringey and later finding work in a small hotel. For reasons that are only known to herself, she had slowly retreated from contact with her four older sisters. Her mother had died when she was 11, her father, with whom she had a fractious relationship, would die in 2004, although an indication of the turmoil surrounding Vincent at the time led her to claim he'd died in 2001.

Quite why Vincent chose to cut herself off from her family we'll never know. Was it shame from the alleged domestic abuse? Was it from her fall from grace from a well-paid city job and a life that had brought the young Londoner into contact with the likes of Nelson Mandela and Gil-Scott Heron, as well as having dined with Stevie Wonder, to working in a budget hotel? Perhaps she was even still suffering at the hands of her then-fiancé? None of this we will ever know.

What we do know, however, from the Christmas gifts wrapped and ready to be delivered that sat around her, is that there appears to have been a move to rebuild bridges with her sisters. Some of those gifts were addressed to members of a family she had not seen for almost two years. It seems that Joyce Vincent was on the verge of hauling her life out of the doldrums of the past two years – wherein she'd suffered at the hands of the aforementioned domestic abuse and more recently had been treated for a peptic ulcer at hospital – and was on the path to sorting out the loose threads.

Joyce Vincent never delivered those Christmas presents. She would never see any member of her family again, despite her sisters hiring a private detective, who indeed found Joyce's bedsit in Wood Green, but got no reply, despite the sound of the television emanating from inside the flat. Nor did the letters her sisters would then write receive a response, leaving them resigned to the idea that their once bright and bubbly sibling had severed all familial ties.

Joyce Vincent's body was discovered on January 25, 2006, lying amongst those undelivered gifts. The television was still on, as was the central heating. Half of her rent had been paid monthly to the Metropolitan Housing Trust by various benefits agencies. No neighbour had raised any concern about the missing tenant, the rank smell coming from the bedsit, or the constant hum of the television. It was only when rent arrears built up to some £2,400 that the bailiffs were sent in. The front door remained double-locked, there was no sign of a break-in, the police report ruled death by natural causes, but the skeletal body was too badly decomposed to conduct a full post-mortem.

It seemed that Joyce Vincent, a young, bright, attractive and upwardly mobile woman with a good job, had died, while the world turned away, apparently oblivious, and resumed going about its business…

## WHAT'S WILSON REALLY LIKE?

**IAN ANDERSON**
"Steven possesses an intellectual musicality that's admirable. He's also obsessed with music, and obsessed with the musical legacy of the 60s and 70s. I think all of that would be a little worrying if it wasn't for the fact that he also gets out on a stage in front of thousands of people as a performer, and gets to do that other thing which is not really geek-like at all. If it wasn't for that then he'd be in danger of being a geek and probably be even paler and more vegan than he is." **SS**

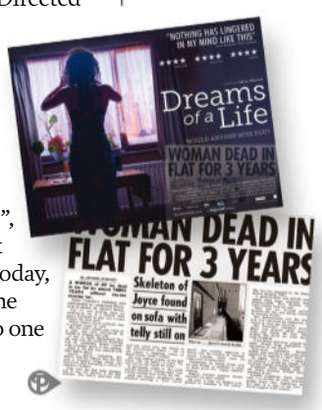
## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH? WILSON ON HIS OTHER PROJECTS

**PORCUPINE TREE**
"Never say never, is what I say. But at the moment there are no plans to do anything. The next year at least is likely to be taken up with my new solo album, and the other guys are all busy with their own projects so I'm not even certain when we could find time to do anything. I'm certainly not averse to the idea of working with them again, but at this point I have no idea what form that might take."

December 2014: It is a few days before Christmas when Steven Wilson, wrapped up against the winter chill, meets *Prog* at his nearby station and we make our way down along the canal to his home, near his own family in south west Hertfordshire. The current Wilson abode is impressive, with tasteful décor. It would appear that Wilson's recording career, that began seriously in the early 1990s with No-Man, has paid dividends. We're met by his partner and their small, playful canine companion. As one would expect, it's shoes off inside. And as any Steven Wilson fan worth their salt would want to know, it's a barefoot Steven Wilson who leads us through the house to a pleasant conservatory on the far side of the house that overlooks the sizable garden. We're brought tea and some rather tasty scones and jam to snack on while we get down to the matter in hand. Who the hell is Steven Wilson, and what is his new album, *Hand. Cannot. Erase.*, all about?

"I saw this documentary, *Dreams Of A Life*, about this woman who seemed to have everything going for her in her life, and yet when she'd died, she remained undiscovered for something like three years. It really stayed with me…" he begins, by way of explanation of the central theme behind the new record.

*Dreams Of A Life* is a 2011 film that will certainly stay with you. Directed by Carol Morley, younger sister of the writer Paul, it's a docu-drama that tells the story of Joyce Vincent. *The Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw wrote that "nothing at the London Film Festival has lingered in my mind like this", while BBC's *Film 2011* made it their film of the week. Even today, on the film's website, someone has tweeted: 'Nothing and no one has made me cry quite like *Dreams Of A Life*'.




## WHAT'S WILSON REALLY LIKE?

**DECLAN COLGAN, Panegyric Recordings: King Crimson, Yes, XTC reissues**

"Steven has grown up with, and has been motivated by, a very deep love and respect of music. He doesn't insert himself into the procedure when he's remixing classic albums. His mixes aren't done in the spirit of somebody trying to stamp their personality on to what's already there. In fact, the good thing about what he does is that you *don't* notice the personality of the remixer. They aren't about him. Steven's essentially about respecting the music as it was but then applying the modern technology and techniques to tracks in order to bring out the best of what's already there." **SS**

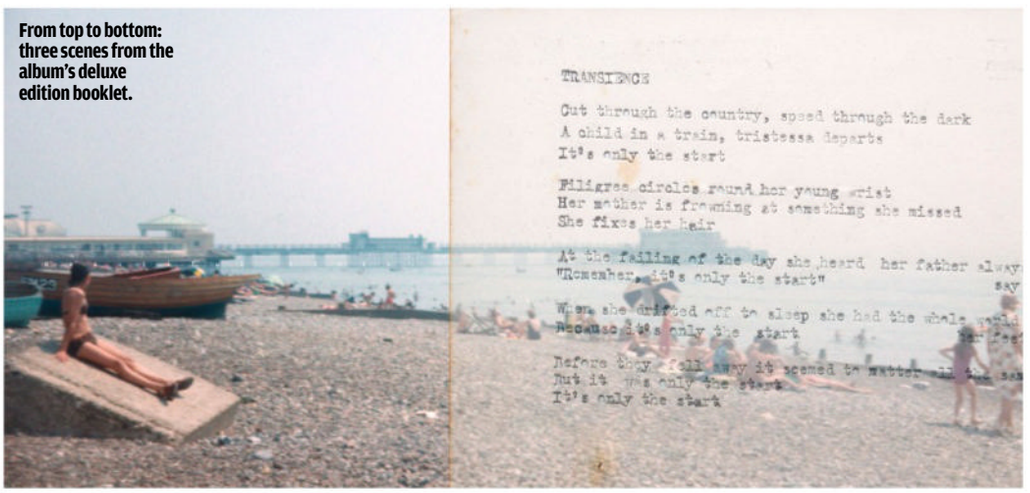
## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH? WILSON ON HIS OTHER PROJECTS

**NO-MAN**

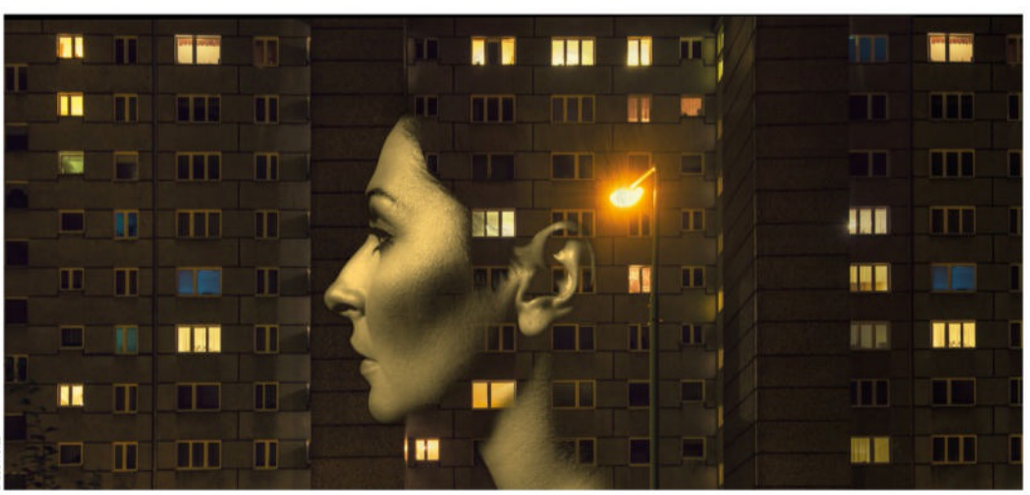
"Nothing planned but that's not to say we won't. But Tim's got his own solo thing going now which is great and I really like it. Tim did originally come to me with the songs that made up *Abandoned Dancehall Dreams* as a No-Man project and I told him I thought they'd be better off as a solo record for him. I really like that record so it'll be interesting to see where Tim goes from here."

The lone ranger: Wilson explores themes of isolation on his new album.

> With the likes of Facebook, on the face of it, it might appear that it had made the world a more open place where we all have windows into other people's lives. But do we really? Is it not just snapshots of a life they want you to see?

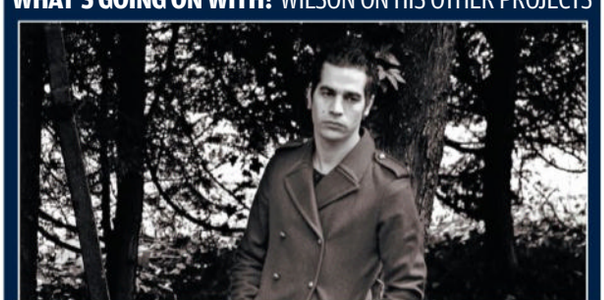



From top to bottom: three scenes from the album's deluxe edition booklet.



LASSE HOILE

## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH? WILSON ON HIS OTHER PROJECTS



**BLACKFIELD**

"I'm sure I'll work with Aviv [Geffen] again. He's been a terrific friend and I've always enjoyed working with him. Again, I don't know what involvement I'd have as I've already said that I was going to take a back seat. Again, not for the foreseeable future but we'll see."

"I should," he stresses, "point out that the album isn't about Joyce Vincent per se, in as much as it's not a concept work that centres on the actual character as the central focal point. What it does do is use her as the main theme behind what I was writing about.

"The really interesting thing here is that you hear her story and you think, 'OK, she was a druggie', or perhaps a bit of a mad old bag lady, the kind of person you've seen around who operates on the fringes of society, or rather someone who society has almost become separated from. But she wasn't. She'd had an interesting life. She'd had a loving family, a good job, lived in a nice flat and met fascinating people. And yet something had happened that saw her retreat from a lot of that, to the point where she ended up on her own and when she died, it seemed to impact on no one. None of her friends or colleagues were tempted to find out where she was or what might have happened to her. It's frightening that in the Facebook age someone can end up so isolated and alone."

It is an intriguing concept, but then this is Steven Wilson we're talking about, so it's hardly a surprise that something like this has grabbed his attention. In the past we've seen Wilson rail against such advances in technology as the iPod, but *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* isn't his big anti-social media discourse. It's something far more personal than that.

*Prog* muses over the fact that, having lived in London for the best part of 25 years, we can count on one hand the neighbours we've gotten to know in that time. The ones we've struck up anything more than a nodding acquaintanceship with. It's a far cry from when we were younger, growing up in Sydney and then Hertfordshire, just a few miles down the road from where Wilson himself grew up and began the musical path that brings us to *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* today. Is it, we wonder, merely a tragically selfish facet of modern day society?

"Yes, I agree," nods Wilson. "With the likes of Facebook, on the face of it, it might appear that it had made their world a more open place where we all have windows into other people's lives. But do we really? Is it not just snapshots of a life they want you to see? And are there parallels here with Joyce Vincent in as much as how she controlled the life she let people into?

"I lived in London for a pretty long time before returning back here where I grew up, and it is different. In the city people do seem to concentrate solely on going about their life without even time to think about anything else, whereas out towards the countryside things do seem a little bit more relaxed. More open. More friendly."

To highlight this, and in typical Wilson style with his frightening attention to detail, there is a companion website to the album, www.handcannoterase.com. It creates the back-story of the life of a young woman that unravels under tragic circumstances. Such detail can be compared to the way Porcupine Tree sprang into life, originally as an idea existing in Wilson's head.

"If you get the deluxe edition, there's even more in terms of creating a life of someone for people to discover. Open that window onto something tangible, and it makes the idea that it all ends up the way it does more difficult to grasp in this day and age," he says.

Specs appeal: is Wilson the figurehead for modern prog?

> I remember seeing this documentary, *Dreams Of A Life*, about this woman who seemed to have everything going for her in her life, and yet when she'd died, she remained undiscovered for something like three years. It really stayed with me...

## WHAT'S WILSON REALLY LIKE?

**ANDY PARTRIDGE, XTC**

"Without sounding like the chairman of the Pat On The Back Society, working with Steven ticks so many of the 'complete joy' boxes. The first time I heard what he was doing with us, I thought, 'How is he getting it to sound so good so quickly?' He's easy to get along with – no ego involved. It's taken me all of my life to really hear what's in music and he's reached that point at a younger age. I think he's a bit of a one-off really, I really do. And damn it, he looks about half his real age!" **SS**

Wilson and his weapon of choice.

> More recently I've been working with bands like XTC, Tears For Fears, Simple Minds, even Roxy Music. That's going to have an effect on what you do.

LASSE HOILE

**Lost in the moment: Wilson in the midst of recording *Hand. Cannot. Erase.***

Conceptually *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* is easily the strongest album to date from Wilson, with a concept that is easy to both grasp and to become involved with on a deeper, cerebral level. The tone of the material is maybe as dark as one might expect from a man known in the past for his love of trains, planes and serial killers – "There is one train journey in this one," he admits, smiling almost sheepishly – but musically *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* is a striking shift onwards from the solo albums he's made thus far. For starters, even with the sombre tone of the subject matter, the overall feel of the music contained inside seems lighter in tone than the dark Victorian ghost story recollections of 2013's *The Raven That Refused To Sing...*

"Well, my father had just passed away when I wrote *The Raven...*," he states, "so it stands to reason I was in a much darker place then. Obviously we're now two years down the line from that and my head's in a much different place. We all move on..."

Musically lighter in tone than *The Raven...*, but no less complex, deep and challenging in places, there's no denying that *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* is a modern day progressive album. With the likes of *3 Years Older, Routine* and the epic *Ancestral* (the latter featuring a quite stunning guitar solo from Guthrie Govan that will take your breath away) all clocking in at around the 10 minute mark, there's plenty for progressive purists to sink their teeth into sonically.

Initial musical reference points that *Prog* picked up on when listening to the album first of all seemed to be Rush, The Who and Marillion...

"I'm glad you said The Who," Wilson smiles. "Look, all that stuff is in my musical DNA. It's what I grew up with, it's what I've always enjoyed listening to. I'm not saying that I actively go out of my way to try and sound like someone else. Of course I don't do that. But equally I'm not so far up my own arse that I don't realise that your musical reference points are going to come to the fore in some way."

*The Raven...* was imbued with a jazzy sound and very much highlighted its protagonist's love of classic, progressive music of the 70s. *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* has a more contemporary feel to it. This should not, according to Wilson, come as much of a surprise.

"For starters, there's less from Theo Travis on this record, so that's why it has a lot less of a jazzy feel to it," he states. "And also, when I was recording *The Raven...* I was also in the middle of a lot of the remix work with Crimson and Yes and Caravan. That's bound to have some kind of effect on what you create yourself. More recently I've been working with bands like XTC, Tears For Fears, Simple Minds, even Roxy Music. That's going to have an effect on what you do."

Travis may feature less on the new record, although he does play on it, but the band who recorded and toured *The Raven...* are all present and correct on *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* This, according to Wilson, is a major factor in

## WHAT'S WILSON REALLY LIKE?

**THEO TRAVIS, sax and flute, Steven Wilson Band**

"In the studio Steven's always very focused and doesn't get distracted, yet he's also very relaxed and easy-going. On the road Steven is very social, keen to be going out for a meal with people, just like anyone else in the group. Backstage he's always keen and interested in what music people are listening to. There was a constant game of 'Beggs Plays Prog', where people had to guess a tune from Nick Beggs' huge range of stuff on his iPod, and see if they could get it within three seconds. Steven nearly always won. Even the really obscure stuff!" **SS**

LASSE HOILE

**The Steven Wilson Band at AIR Studios.**

LASSE HOILE

**Wilson recording the album.**

Friends say there's "no ego involved" with the musical mastermind.

> I would love for one of my songs to become huge, but I'm not certain I would even enjoy the attention and accompanied baggage a huge hit might bring.

explaining the difference when *Prog* enquires as to what exactly marks out the difference between a Steven Wilson solo album and a Porcupine Tree album.

"Largely the musicians I'm working with," he explains. "I'm not certain I could have made any of the albums, certainly not the last two, with the Porcupine Tree guys. That's not to belittle them in any way. What you had with Porcupine Tree was a band made up of four equal members. OK, even if it did have a de facto leader as such, it was still four individual band members all bringing something to the table. So if you have four different sets of musical ideas, then what you end up putting on the record is derived from a much smaller musical area because it's the compromise between the four of you.

"With my solo stuff, I write it, and I present it to the guys I'm paying to play it. It's as simple as that really. As a solo artist I feel sometimes like I'm more of a composer and these great musicians that I work with continue to create amazing things with the material that I've written."

*Hand. Cannot. Erase.* is clearly the most melodic musical creation Wilson has conjured up as a solo artist. Even if the aforementioned epics twist and turn provocatively, and the middle couplet of *Home Invasion* and *Regret* explode in a miasma of some of the most overtly proggy sounds that Steven Wilson has created thus far in his career, there is still some strikingly contemporary fare here. The Manics-like title track, *Perfect Life* and *Happy Returns* all hint at the kind of catchy, more easily digestible side of Wilson's songwriting that have thus far given us the likes of *Drive Home*, *Shallow*

## **WHAT'S GOING ON WITH?** WILSON ON HIS OTHER PROJECTS

**BASS COMMUNION**

"Well, I did only play the second ever Bass Communion show last year, which was part of this Dutch festival called Brombron, where they take two different artists and they then work together for a few days and then perform a concert together. It was the very last one and I did it with Thomas Köner, who is an ambient artist I'm a big fan of. His 1992 album *Teimo* is a big favourite of mine. He recorded gongs under water for it. The kind of thing that'll sell about 15 copies, but I love it."

and *Lazarus*. Add in a gentler vocal approach from Wilson himself and a bigger PR company working the new album than previously, and one wonders if there are people in the Wilson set-up who are pushing for mainstream acceptance for the once-bedroom studio musician. Will the geeks finally inherit the earth?

"Well I certainly don't think a huge mainstream hit is beyond me," he says, matter-of-factly. "But I don't go out of my way to write anything that deliberate. Maybe, when Porcupine Tree had just signed to Lava around the time of *In Absentia* (2002) there may have been pressure from the label to come up with some kind of single-orientated material. But I don't look back on that particularly fondly. I write what I write and it has to fit the over-all concept of what I'm doing.

"Yes, I would love for one of my songs to become huge, and I believe that in the past I've written stuff that could easily cross over. But the industry, for what it actually is these days, isn't really set up for someone like me to do that. And in reality, does anyone really break through on the scale anymore? Of course I harboured dreams of being a rock star when I was a kid. But these days I see myself as a musician. It's different.

"I'm in the very fortunate position of having each solo album sell more than the previous one. Porcupine Tree had a similar sales trajectory. In this day and age I have to say I'm more than happy with that state of affairs. I'm not certain I would even enjoy the attention and accompanied baggage a huge hit might bring."

This is true. Whilst we all know Wilson the musician, few know Wilson the man. This writer has known Steven for the best part of 20 years. He remains a charming, affable and intriguing character, but one who has kept his private life exactly that. We know he enjoys a drink on occasion, but you're unlikely to see him clutching a glass of fizz at the latest celebrity bash. If drugs have ever reared their head, it's not something anyone knows about. As for women... Well, let's just say that at two years younger than your correspondent, he annoyingly looks a good decade more youthful and just leave it there...

"I am a private person," he says. "And that's the way I like to keep it. As I said, I'm a musician, not a celebrity. That's not why I do what I do and it allows me a life to enjoy."

How does he feel about being seen pretty much as the figurehead for modern progressive music? As one might expect, he is rather self-effacing in his response.

"Maybe along with Opeth, Anathema and perhaps The Pineapple Thief, all of whom I feel a great empathy with, we are doing something at a different level and doing it sufficiently differently. Is that something to be a figurehead of, and if so, am I really that guy?"

Equally, there are those, as *Prog* is only too aware, who find the ubiquity of Wilson, given his prolific work rate, a stick with which to beat the man. It's not uncommon for him not to have featured in our pages for several months, only for some wag to comment, when we announce a new issue, "I suppose it's that Steven Wilson again..."

"I guess that goes with the figurehead thing," he muses. "It's not something I can really let trouble me. I guess that I've always given an honest answer to a question when asked for my opinion on something. And I guess some people take that for arrogance, especially if it's a viewpoint they don't agree with. It's not, I hasten to add, but people can choose to see it that way."

As we walk back along the canal to the station, I mention the seemingly upbeat ending to *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* How, unlike Joyce Carol Vincent's sad life, the album seemingly ends on a note of hope with *Happy Returns* and its line '*...bet you thought I was dead, but I'm still here...*'

"I think that was important," he says, "not least because it makes the whole thing not about her and takes it off in a potentially different direction."

Wilson takes his leave with the words "I'm off to visit my mum", who lives round the corner from him and who, along with his brother and family, he tells me he'll be spending Christmas day with. It somehow all seems fitting.

The sound of *Hand. Cannot. Erase.* fills my journey back into the metropolis of London. So too does the memory of Joyce Carol Vincent. Alighting the train at Euston and heading into the masses of commuters all lost in their own little world and making their own way home, the idea that one can simply drift away from society is a strikingly cold thought.

Then, out of nowhere, I bump into a friend, making their own way back home. We greet each other with a hearty hug and depart with season's greetings ringing in our ears. I'm off to catch up with friends for a final blow out before Christmas. I am, I ponder, one of the lucky ones. But with *Hand. Cannot. Erase.*, there is no denying that Steven Wilson has made one of his strongest statements yet. Its message will stay with you, long after the music has faded away...

## WHAT'S GOING ON WITH? WILSON ON HIS OTHER PROJECTS

**STORM CORROSION**

"Mike [Åkerfeldt] and I have always said we'd love to do another Storm Corrosion record. The only problem is when we might fit it into our schedules. The original idea was that we didn't want anyone to know we were working on the last one until we were ready to release it. The problem was that Mike [Portnoy] thought he was going to be involved and let the cat out the bag. So I'm sure if we do another record then we won't be telling anyone about it until it's ready to come out."

## WHAT'S WILSON REALLY LIKE?

**TIM BOWNESS, No-Man**

"He was 19 when we first worked together and even then he had a supreme level of confidence and competence. If our conversation was intense, our first recording session was even more so. Within two hours we'd written two radically different songs – one a stately epic and the other a brutal slab of noise. By the end of the session we'd formed a band. A superb collaborator, Steven's sense of what's musically and sonically appropriate has always been highly advanced. A great listener, open to varied ideas and approaches... from a personal point of view, he's been genuinely encouraging over the years." **SS**

10 Years Of PROG 2016

# "Pure Hardcore"

YES

From the influence of an Indian guru to the loss of Rick Wakeman, *Prog* takes an in-depth look into the making of **Yes**' opinion-dividing sixth album, *Tales From Topographic Oceans*.

**Words:** Sid Smith
**Images:** Roger Dean

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// I actually wanted to record *Tales From Topographic Oceans* in a tent in this beautiful wood that I'd found, miles from anywhere. I thought we could bury a generator 300 yards away under the ground so we could have electricity in the tent. We'd be able to record there and have all these natural sounds around us. That's where my brain was at at that time. Of course, they thought I was totally crazy!" laughs Jon Anderson.

"Crazy" turned out to be one of the nicer things said about the sixth Yes studio album upon its release in December 1973. Although achieving Gold status on both sides of the Atlantic, it received a mauling from many critics. When the band played the four-sided opus live, many fans found it a challenge. But challenge is exactly what Yes thrived on. Always a band on a mission and in a hurry to push forward, Yes were keen to do whatever was in their power to be at the forefront of a musical movement where nothing that was worth anything stood still for very long.

Chris Squire observed that the build-up to *Tales...* had been going on for some time, with *Heart Of The Sunrise* marking the realisation of an ambition to produce something on a much bigger scale. With *Close To The Edge*, they went bigger still. An epic release, it meshed adventurous solo excursions with tightly knit arrangements. The punch Yes delivered came not from a single source but rather their collective force. Anderson was determined their music should avoid showboating licks for their own sake. "There were a lot of bands up there soloing forever but that wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to create music that had length and breadth and adventure, that would carry the audience through this experience. With lights and staging, you could take them on a journey."

They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. *Tales From Topographic Oceans* began with a single conversation between two characters at very different ends of the musical spectrum. There, in Bill Bruford's London flat in early March 1973, along with dozens of other friends celebrating Bruford's wedding earlier in the day, Jon Anderson sat perched on an open windowsill talking with Jamie Muir. "He was an unbelievable stage performer," says Anderson of the eccentric King Crimson percussionist, known at the time for wearing bearskins, spitting blood capsules from his mouth and flailing his percussion rig and packing cases with heavy chains. "I wanted to know what made him do that, what had influenced him."

Muir enthused about *Autobiography Of A Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. The guru, who'd died in 1952, was well-known in esoteric circles, and had also made a more secular cameo appearance on the cover of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, wedged

between HG Wells and James Joyce. Reading Yogananda's words, Muir told the singer, had had a profound impact upon him. "He said to me, 'Here, read it,' and it started me off on the path of becoming aware that there was even a path," says Anderson. "Jamie was like a messenger for me and came to me at the perfect time in my life… he changed my life."

It was powerful stuff. Reading the book prompted Muir to quit music and become a Buddhist monk, and while the effect upon Anderson may not have been so extreme, it was the catalyst that took Yes into uncharted waters.

Discovering a reference to the different levels and divisions within Hindu scriptures in a footnote led to a 'Eureka!' moment for Anderson as the group toured Japan. Convinced he'd found the structural framework within which to place the large-scale ideas and concepts he'd been mulling over, he found a willing ally in Steve Howe. Having written *Roundabout* and *Close To The Edge* together, there was a real bond between the pair.

"We were really up for the big, challenging things like, 'Let's do an album with four *Close To The Edge*s,'" laughs the guitarist.

Over several post-gig evenings in candlelit hotel rooms, locked away from all the usual distractions from life on the road, they trawled through a huge accumulated array of musical sketches and motifs, searching for pieces to complement Anderson's thematic ideas.

"I've a lot of cassettes of Jon and I sitting in places like New York or Cincinnati recording songs," recalls Howe. "Jon would say to me, 'What have you got that's a bit like that…' so I'd play him something and he'd go, 'That's great. Have you got anything else?' and I'd play him another tune. I notice that one of the pieces he turned down early on eventually became part of side three. He heard it later and said, 'That's a good piece,' because we were looking for something different then."

At the end of a marathon all-night writing session in Savannah, Georgia, the basic themes and broad outline of the next Yes project had finally coalesced. Alan White recalls them presenting their deliberations to the rest of the group. "I thought it was great. The band wanted to make a big statement here worldwide. We had this whole story, you know?"

Howe remembers a slightly more cautious reception. "Some guys in the band were like, 'Hold on a minute.' They were fine with a double album but were, you know, 'Just *four* songs?' But Jon and I did manage to sell the idea."

If the starting point of *Tales…* had come about when the paths of Yes and King Crimson had accidentally crossed at a party, the next stage in the story found Yes indebted to another part of the prog spectrum: Emerson Lake And Palmer and their Manticore Studios, based in an old converted cinema in Fulham. Over several weeks in the summer of 1973, occupying the main stage at the rehearsal complex, they got to grips with fragments, sketches and outlines. In some respects, this was business as usual for the group. Countless times in their history, Yes had sewn together different musical elements.

Never the easiest of jobs, the arrival of Wakeman in 1971, who understood the nuts and bolts of the music, had improved the pace with which loose ends and threads might be put to use or dispatched. If things weren't quite so quick this time, it came down in part at least to the sheer scale of the task. Nailing one track can be hard enough. Trying to map out four, each lasting the side of an album, was enough to give even the most enthusiastic in the band pause for thought. The logistics of creating a piece that would go through several distinct transformations over 20 minutes was a formidable prospect even for a group with *Close To The Edge* under their belt.

Likening the process to climbing a mountain, Anderson argues, "Sometimes you need someone to say, 'This is where we're going to go; we're going to make it, we've done it before. Don't worry, it'll be okay.' If you wait for everyone else to arrive at a decision, we'd still be climbing the mountain!"

He readily admits he was frequently overbearing during the writing and rehearsals, chivvying his bandmates along, trying to keep people focused. "So many things happened in that two-and-a-half-month period. In rehearsal I tended to know exactly where we were going, to a point. I knew there were going to be some solos from Steve, and in the first movement there were solos from Rick, and in the second movement. In the third movement there'd be solos from Chris and, especially the fourth movement, a lot of drums. I had such great faith in doing it."

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Anderson and Howe on the *Tales…* tour of the US, 1974.

> "I wanted to create music that had length and breadth and adventure that would carry the audience through this experience."
>
> **Jon Anderson**

That faith was something shared by Howe. It was tough going, he admits, but there was a sense that there lay an unprecedented opportunity before the group, provided they were able to keep their nerve.

"As hard as it was, and it was hard, nobody wanted to bottle out of what we'd committed ourselves to do. We just knew we had a big landscape we could explore. Side one set the scene so much. It was showing that we wanted to use some themes but use them in different ways. It was quite plain what we were doing.

"By the time we got to the second side, I think we really wanted to go off somewhere else altogether if we could. There's folky bits where I'm playing lute and we got very light and spry, which is its own dynamic. We could really stretch out and no less so than on side three, when most of the beginning is a stretch-out of some mad, really quite wacky ideas — some quite Stravinsky, some quite folky. With *Leaves Of Green* you get back to the roots of our music. There's almost a Renaissance period that we play at the end of side three. To close, we had to do something that was going to be bigger than big. We felt that with what we had constructed we had a beautiful song, *Nous Sommes Du Soleil*, and there was a use of theme again that we did nicely I think."

Anderson recalls being eager to get started as early as possible because they had so much to get through, though not everyone in the group shared that particular body clock. "It's a known fact that Chris Squire never wanted to play music before midday," laughs Alan White. "We'd spend all day going over things and we'd get to dinner time and then get some rest. There was some trial and error initially. It was a collection of lots of pieces of music that we had carrying the story. We had to find a way of joining the jigsaw puzzle together to make it work."

With much of that puzzle now in place, albeit somewhat loosely, Yes transferred to Morgan Studios in Willesden. Its urban location, on a busy road with heavy traffic, was about as far away from the countryside idyll Jon Anderson had originally envisaged for the recording as you could get. However, on the plus side, it boasted a 24-track desk that was more than capable of containing the band's

Yes in 1974 (l to r): Steve Howe, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Patrick Moraz.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

Steve Howe shooting Chris Squire as the band land in the US.

Howe, Anderson and White, waiting for the stage to be rebuilt for a pre-tour rehearsal.

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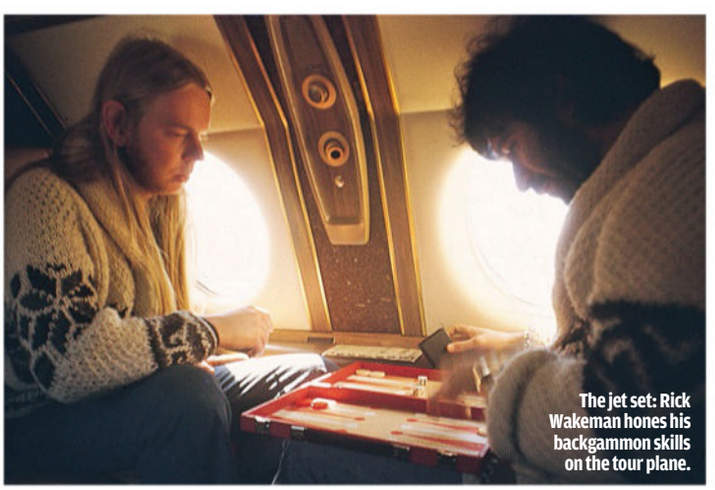
Tales from the road: one of Roger Dean's shots from the early part of 1974's US tour.



The jet set: Rick Wakeman hones his backgammon skills on the tour plane.

"The whole band was into smoking dope and hash and Rick was into drinking beer. He never touched pot. I don't know what it was, but he was on the outside."

**Eddy Offord**

expansive musical ambitions. And that lack of bucolic charm? Well, Rick Wakeman had the answer. "One day Rick was in a particularly funny mood, which is not hard for Rick — he used to play jokes on everyone," reveals White. "He said he wanted some cows in the studio. So, he had a cardboard cutout cow at one end of Morgan Studio, so we all said we didn't mind. Then he brought some palm trees in. I was like, 'Okay Rick, have you finished decorating now?' you know? 'It's a nice environment now,' he said, and I went, 'Okay, I can live with that...'"

As an indicator of how strange things had become, White also remembers a shower cubicle complete with tiles being built inside the studio in order to try to replicate the sound Anderson heard when he was singing in the shower at home.

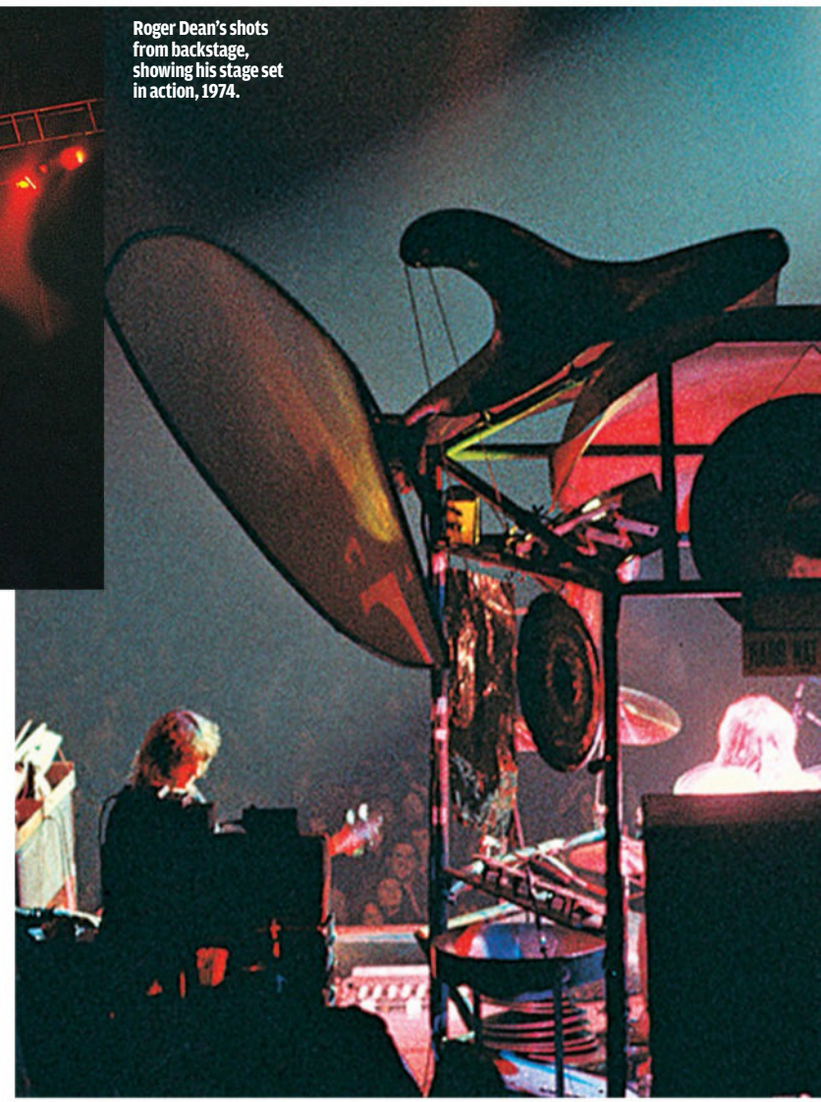
Ask any musician what their ambition was, the chances are the opportunity to make a record would be pretty high on the list. All the players in Yes had been there and done that several times over. As seasoned and successful professionals, there was no naivety about what was involved. They'd experienced the nitty-gritty of putting records together. Yet this time it was different. Every day, as each of them drove from home to the studio, the distance between what Anderson and Howe had outlined and the reality of what was going onto tape gnawed at their confidence. Of course, other sessions hadn't always been plain sailing, but nobody in the band was quite prepared for how choppy the waters had now become.

Chris Squire recalled in 1992 that despite the cardboard cows and DIY plumbing, there was little in the way of levity. Journeying deeper into the making of the album, he and Anderson were bumping heads. "At that time, Jon had this visionary idea that you could just walk into a studio and if the vibes were right, the music would be great at the end of the day... which is one way of looking at things! It isn't reality. It took a lot of Band-Aids and careful surgery in the harmony and embellishment department to make it into something."

Wakeman's musical skills and flair for arrangements had been heavily utilised throughout the making of *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. However, changes in the personal and social interactions between the band took their toll in the confines of Morgan. As the construction of the vast musical edifice continued, the personal harmony prevalent on other albums was now rather elusive. Speaking in 1995, co-producer Eddy Offord commented on the rift that opened up during the recording. "At that point it was obvious that Rick became really much more outside the rest of the band. It wasn't so much musical direction... If you want the honest truth, it was the fact that the whole band was into smoking dope and hash and Rick was into drinking beer. He never touched pot. I don't know what it was, but he was on the outside."

But there was perhaps another, more significant factor. The phenomenal success of Wakeman's solo career with *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* had created its own momentum and, not unreasonably, there was demand for a follow-up. As *Tales...* slowly progressed during the summer and early autumn, Wakeman, when not supplying keyboards to Black Sabbath, who were working in the adjacent studio, was also busy scoring his next solo project, *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*.

Anderson, believing that these extracurricular activities were distracting and preventing Wakeman from contributing to the full



Roger Dean's shots from backstage, showing his stage set in action, 1974.

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extent as he had done on previous recordings, was in little doubt as to what the priority should have been. "My feeling was, 'Why don't you put that music into this project, into *Tales…*?' We had a couple of times when Rick said, 'Well, I'm doing what I want to do,' and I was like, 'Okay, well, I'll just get on with it.'"

For his part, Wakeman had genuine misgivings about the general direction of the material. "Yes was heading towards avant-garde jazz rock and I had nothing to offer there," he observed in 1974. "We had enough material for one album but we felt we had to do the double."

Marshalling both music and esoteric concepts into a series of cohesive suites required a kind of commitment that was beyond their usual experience, says Howe. That some were struggling was, of course, a cause for concern but, he argues, the way around that was to overcome the doubt by diving in. "You could say to another member, 'Well, you don't like this bit but have you got a part worked out yet? Because if you find a part, you'll get involved in the music!' Jon and I sometimes really had to spur the guys on."

A byproduct of Wakeman's absences was to create a space for others to fill. White recalls sitting at the piano and coming up with the chords that would be used for the *'Hold me my love'* bridge on *Ritual*. On another occasion, the drummer sat tinkering with a guitar, working out some chords. They captured Anderson's attention as he strolled past. "Jon said, 'Show me those chords,' and then he took it over," resulting in the chord sequence being added to *The Remembering*.

A hungry beast, *Tales…* called upon all of their songwriting resources, meaning that many items that had been discarded from their previous writing sessions were now re-examined and press-ganged into service. Some, such as the *Young Christians* theme that appears on side one, dated as far back as *Fragile*. Back then the passage had been given a much rockier treatment but had ultimately failed to find a suitable home. At this point, necessity demanded it be piped aboard the good ship *Topographic*.

The clock was ticking for Yes. A UK tour was already advertised for November and December. Factory time for the pressing of the finished album was already booked in. Every hour that swept by on the studio clock not only broke down into minutes and seconds but pounds and pence as well. "God bless Eddy Offord," laughs Anderson, referring to the period when the pair were literally camping out at Morgan Studios as they worked around the clock, even sleeping there in order to cross the finishing line as mastering and manufacturing dates loomed.

"As hard as it was, and it was hard, nobody wanted to bottle out of what we'd committed ourselves to do. We just knew we had a big landscape we could explore."

**Steve Howe**

"In those days it was like rolling the dice, whether you could mix it well on the first take or the 20th take. There's a classic photograph of all of us on a fader. It was crazy but what happened was we would mix in sections: two minutes, one minute, four minutes and so on. Then we'd have the quarter-inch tapes hanging from the wall and Eddy would then stick it together with Sellotape and that was how we made albums in those days. There was no automation or click tracks."

Perhaps not surprisingly, remixing the album in 5.1 surround sound was no easy task for Steven Wilson. Even with so many previous surround sound remixes of classic material under his belt, Wilson recalls how daunting it was to delve into the source tapes and make sense of what were in effect micro-managed moments and decisions taken on the fly 43 years ago.

"Even though it was recorded on 24-track, the complexity of the music and arrangements meant that every inch of tape was crammed with overdubs. One channel on the tape might start off as vocals, but then switch to a percussion overdub, then a lead guitar phrase, then some mellotron, et cetera. In order to have maximum control over the mix, and to be able to give each sound its own space and treatment, I had to identify and break every element out onto its own channel. This meant that one side of the original album could extrapolate out from

24 channels to 50 or 60 individual parts. Actually, I think side four ended up being more like 100!"

Although they'd always built their albums from a patchwork quilt of takes, *Tales…* had without doubt been the most arduous recording in the band's career. The grand themes and vistas, meticulous sonic sculpting and textural details embedded into the album hadn't come easy, and nor did the completion of the record. With mastering and manufacturing deadlines looming, as Anderson and Offord sat bleary-eyed after the final overnight mixing session, their sleep-deprived state caused a last-minute drama that came perilously close to farce.

"At about nine in the morning, me and Eddy packed up the tapes and went to our car and he put the tapes on the top while he found the keys," says Anderson. "Then we got in and started to drive toward the main road with all the tapes still on top of the car, making them slide off into the middle of the road. There was a big, red double-decker bus coming towards us and I ran out and stopped the bus [laughs]. That was our wild experience of making this album — we nearly had it crunched under a double-decker bus!"

The true extent of Wakeman's antipathy towards Yes' music became obvious early on in the UK tour in November 1973. "I remember we played the whole thing in its entirety at The Rainbow and he wasn't happy," says White. "It kind of went downhill from there."

Wakeman's growing disenchantment would famously manifest itself in eating curry on stage during *Tales…* and though it became something of a running joke, it was in truth an expression of his boredom and a protest of sorts. Looking back, White feels a sense of disappointment at the rift between Wakeman and the rest of the band.

"For some reason Rick couldn't get his head around what we were doing but he played all the parts and he was great. He's just an amazing keyboard player. But he couldn't see where the band was going. He felt he wanted to move in his own direction."

Even some of the band's long-term supporters in the press at the time baulked at a record that had slipped far from rock's usual moorings. With this double album, the argument went, they had overreached. Wakeman's oft-quoted assertion that the album suffered from too much padding because of a lack of real musical substance became received wisdom in discussions of the band's work. In later years it was routinely cited as evidence of prog rock's over-indulgence, with sceptics pointing to its 80 minutes as proof of hubris and artistic extravagance.

When Yes went off the road in January 1974, Wakeman staged and recorded *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*. Shortly after its release in May '74, it topped the album charts. Hearing the news on his 25th birthday, Wakeman rang in his resignation from the band on the same day. Anderson recalls the recriminations following Wakeman's departure. "Management and the record company were saying, 'Why didn't you just do another *Fragile*?' I just had the feeling that if we don't try something in this lifetime then, okay, we're just rock stars, and I personally don't think that way… You've got to do things that are a little bit different in this lifetime. And when you have the chance to do it, you have to jump in that water and enjoy it."

For Howe, the album remains an important milestone in the Yes story. "It was a time of spreading our wings, a wonderful project where we went to the end of the earth to do it. There was often a feeling that disaster was almost about to strike, but we got there in the end. You have to account for *Tales…* in our history to properly talk about what Yes achieved because it was quite exceptional. I don't think we'd be the same group without it."

In 2016, as Yes toured America, *The Revealing Science Of God* and *Ritual* resurfaced. "Going on the road playing side one and side four is really nostalgic," says White. "We made a great career of really adventurous material that was trying to move music in a good direction. Side one is a difficult thing to play and side four, you've got the whole *Ritual* thing at the end, which is quite a thing to put together, where you've got the drums playing the lead melody. We had a theme running through the album, recurring though different songs, and it culminated in the whole band playing the melody on drums, all of us at the same time. I'm really looking forward to playing it live again."

*Tales From Topographic Oceans* is an album you can't be ambivalent about. Asked if it's a formidable achievement or a folly, Steven Wilson says, "Both! One of the things I miss in modern rock music is the will to reach for the stars and risk falling flat on your face. Conventional wisdom might be that with this album Yes roundly achieved the latter, but I'm happy to see a growing number of those like me that appreciate its beauty and ambition. Even when the ideas perhaps aren't entirely coming off, I still admire and enjoy the sheer uncompromising strangeness of it. It doesn't have the immediacy of some of Yes' other records of the era, but I think, given time, it reveals itself as perhaps their greatest musical statement of all. It's pure hardcore Yes!"

# THE LAST Straw

It's been 30 years since the final Fish-fronted **Marillion** album was released, and it was a tumultuous journey for all involved. From the influence of alcohol to incessant touring schedules and the final bitter split, *Prog* discovers the inside story behind *Clutching At Straws*.

**Words:** Dave Everley **Photos:** Steve Rothery

The Freilichtbühne Loreley is one of the world's great venues. Perched high on the Loreley, a 400-foot rock overlooking the Rhine Gorge in Western Germany, this open-air amphitheatre was originally built by the Nazis as a Thingplatz – a showcase venue for the Third Reich to stage displays of propaganda thinly disguised as drama.

Other, older myths surround the Loreley. According to local folklore, it was the home of a siren who would draw passing ships onto the rocks more than 400 feet below. This macabre legend has been referenced in music by everyone from German composer Felix Mendelssohn to Wishbone Ash.

On July 18, 1987, Marillion arrived at the Loreley to play one of the biggest headlining shows of their career yet. It was two years since the release of

**"The unity of the band seemed to have gone..." Steve Rothery wasn't wrong. Fish (left) and Pete Trewavas in 1988 as the band began to fall apart.**

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable. The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

**Fish**

*Misplaced Childhood*, the album that turned this unfashionable prog band into the unlikeliest pop stars of the decade.

But success had brought unforeseen issues. The demands of constant touring were taking their toll, and the gang mentality that originally fuelled them was fracturing. This turbulence was captured on the band's most recent album, *Clutching At Straws*, a snapshot of a band struggling to keep their heads above water. In its central character, Torch, frontman Fish laid his own inner turmoil bare.

The 20,000 fans gathered at Loreley to see them might not have been aware, but Marillion were under a dark cloud. Behind the scenes, the band had split into two camps: Fish on one side, the rest of his bandmates on the other.

"Things were very miserable," says guitarist Steve Rothery today. "If you watch the *Live From Loreley* video, you can see the mood. The unity had gone. You can blame many things, you can point the finger at people who were hanging round and aggravating the problem, whispering in ears. But whatever the reason, it reached critical mass. There was something fundamentally wrong with how things were."

Their career wasn't dashed on the rocks at Loreley, but they were listing badly. Within 18 months, the Fish era had come crashing to an acrimonious end, leaving the wreckage of broken friendships in its wake. At the heart of it all was *Clutching At Straws* – Marillion's dark masterpiece.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album," says Fish. "I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell…'"

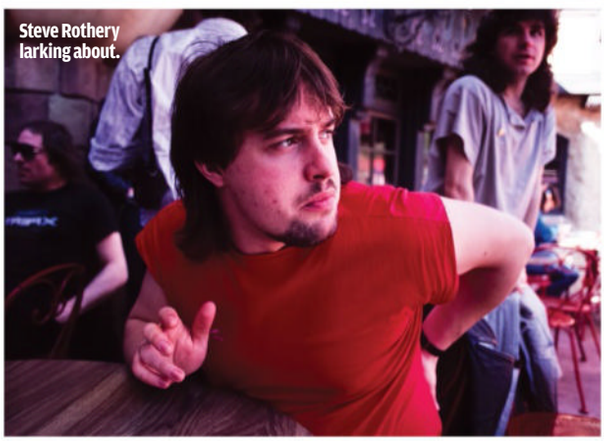
"I feel less warm towards that album than I do *Misplaced Childhood*," says keyboard player Mark Kelly. "But I know some people really like it."

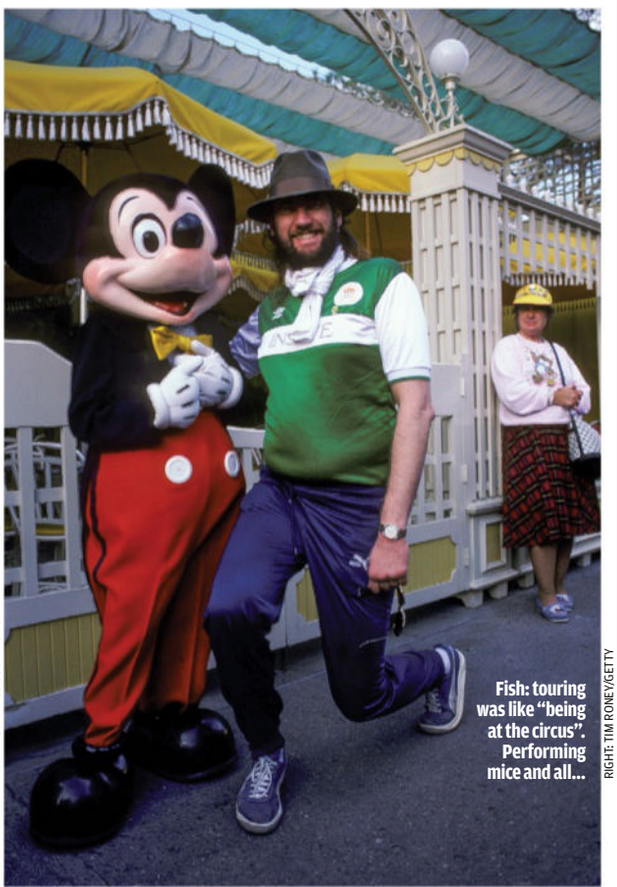
"It's a strange album, *Clutching*," says Rothery. "It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."

The retrospective view of their fourth album is one of the few things the men who made it disagree on – remarkable, given the circumstances that surrounded it and the eventual outcome. On most other points, they're in surprising accordance, albeit with markedly different individual perspectives. Certainly, all five members put the root of their problems down to the incessant touring schedule imposed on them by their manager, John Arnison.

"Just when you thought it was coming to an end, there'd be another fucking series of gigs," says Fish. "We were squeezing the pips dry on *Misplaced*. It was like being at the circus. It's all fucking singing and dancing, but when you walk outside the tent, it's scabby animals and shite. I was physically and mentally exhausted a lot of the time."

Warm Wet Circles: it wasn't all tough times…


Steve Rothery larking about.


Fish: touring was like "being at the circus". Performing mice and all…

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

RIGHT: TIM RONEY/GETTY

"I think Fish probably felt the pressure more than anyone else," says bassist Peter Trewavas. "If you're the person everybody wants to talk to, then the demands on your time are so great. Maybe we could have been a bit more understanding about that. But when things are happening, it's like a fairground ride."

The singer admits that he was partying hard, partly as a release from the seemingly endless grind. His exploits were seized on with glee by the press, who liked their rock stars larger than life and, preferably, always ready with an open wallet.

"There were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer, let's be open and honest about it," says Fish. "People go out on tour, they get tired and worn down, they need something to pep them up for the show. Then suddenly you've finished the show and you're still getting pepped up. You're in an eternal overdraft of energy."

It was this hedonistic lifestyle that prompted the singer to create the character who sat at the centre of *Clutching At Straws*. Torch was supposedly a writer suffering from writer's block, an older, more disillusioned version of the Jester from Marillion's earlier album. At 29, he was the same age as the man who conceived him. It didn't take a psychologist to work out that Torch, like the Jester and the kid from *Misplaced Childhood*, was essentially Fish himself.

"I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego," he admits. "I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."

The band needed a holiday, but the break that could have eased their situation and reset increasingly strained relationships never materialised. Instead, the band were bundled back into the studio to record a follow-up to *Misplaced Childhood*. EMI wanted another hit album in short order.

"The touring really did take it out of us," says drummer Ian Mosley. "Then reality hit us when it came down to writing another album. You've got a blank canvas in front of you and the record company is going, 'Is it ready yet?'"

"Now we were in the Premier League the label didn't want us to turn into fucking Leicester City," says Fish.

The band began sketching out rough ideas for their fourth album at Steve Rothery's house in Wendover. Peter Trewavas remembers sketching out

Fish: just a swift one.

"Let's be honest and open about it: there were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer."

**Fish**

"It's a strange album, *Clutching*. It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."
**Steve Rothery**

The back cover of "drunken poet" album *Clutching At Straws*.

COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON AND JANUS VAN HELFTEREN

Bar Brawl: The photo template for the cover of the album, plus (below) Mark Wilkinson's initial artwork.

the beginnings of opening track *Hotel Hobbies* – "the soundscapey bit" he says – before the label paid for the band to decamp at a rehearsal studio between London and Brighton.

"They wanted to get us away from the clubs and bars and dark influences," says Fish. "Everybody went down there, we were going to be good little boys and concentrate on writing an album. And it was just awful. People were getting tetchy."

There was one song that did stand out. It had emerged from one of the band's sporadic post-pub jam sessions and was powered by a catchy Mark Kelly keyboard riff ("What we called 'The widdly-widdly synth stuff,'" he says). The song would eventually be titled *Incommunicado*. But, according to Fish, the rest of the band were dismissive of it.

"I always loved The Who, and I wanted to do more rocky stuff, but the band were not into the idea," says Fish. "And they were not into *Incommunicado*. But we played it to Chris Kimsey and he said, 'That's it – that's the single.' I was really chuffed. I felt like I got a backing for what I wanted to do."

This split in opinion over *Incommunicado* didn't augur well for Marillion's future. It wasn't the only point of difference either. Steve Rothery had brought in a song he'd been working on that the band thought had a lot of potential. Fish supplied a set of vivid lyrics inspired by observations he'd had while drinking one night in a pub near his parents' house in North Berwick. The song was titled *Warm Wet Circles*. But not everyone was impressed.

"I liked the music, but I hated the fact that it was called *Warm Wet Circles*," says Mark Kelly. "We weren't chasing hit singles, but if you want to kill a song stone dead, call it *Warm Wet Circles*. Fish's attitude was a bit like, 'Fuck you, I'm going to do what I want.'"

> "I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego. I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."
>
> **Fish**

Marillion's traditional approach to songwriting involved building up segments of songs which they would then find a way of piecing together like a jigsaw. Or, in Fish's words, "Trying to put them together with a hammer."

"It was a bit like *Misplaced Childhood Part 2*," agrees Steve Rothery. "We were trying to stick all these tracks together that didn't really belong together. We had to step back a bit and re-evaluate what we were doing."

This much became clear when Chris Kimsey, who had produced *Misplaced Childhood* and would work on the new album, arrived with the band's A&R man, Hugh Stanley-Clarke, to hear what the band had written. The pair were unimpressed.

"They were, like, 'Is that all you've managed to come up with?'" says Fish. "Chris said, 'I don't hear any fucking singles in there.'"

Musically, Marillion had largely jettisoned the more traditional prog elements of their sound. The ornate musicality of *Grendel* and *The Web* was a distant memory, replaced by a more mature approach that wouldn't upset the daytime radio listeners who had bought *Kayleigh* in their droves. But lyrically, *Clutching At Straws* disappeared down an altogether bleaker rabbit hole.

"It's a lot less optimistic an album," says guitarist Steve Rothery. "Some of it symbolises Fish's disillusionment – he wanted success and he got success, but it didn't bring him the personal happiness that I think he expected it to."

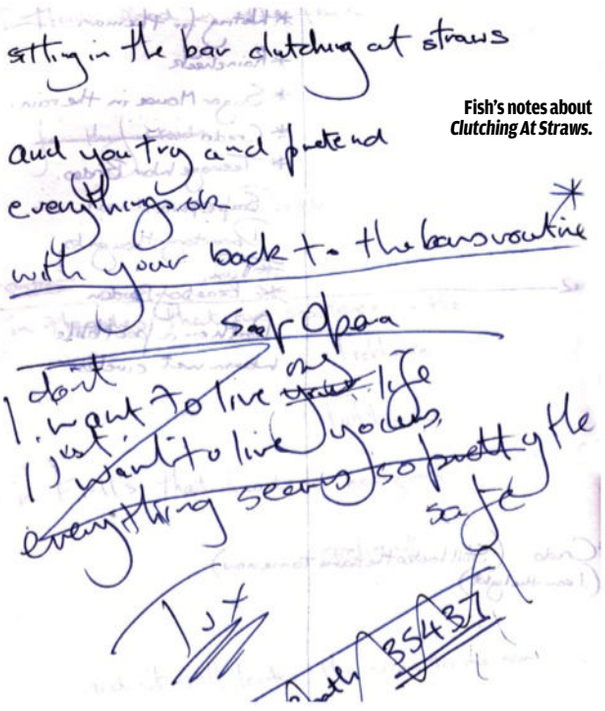
Together Yet Apart: it became Fish versus Marillion.

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

"It's a 'drunken poet' album," says Fish. "That's why the cover featured Burns and Kerouac and Truman Capote. All those people were people who had a strong association with alcohol."

Booze soaked deep into the pores of *Clutching At Straws*, from the whisky-and-shattered-dreams anthem *Slàinte Mhath* (a Scottish drinking toast) to *Torch Song*, in which a doctor solemnly intones that if the titular character doesn't stop drinking, he "won't reach 30". The latter referenced Beat author Jack Kerouac's famous quote: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

"It felt like, 'Oh, I've got an alcohol problem, I take too many drugs, look at me, I'm a rock star, I've got problems,'" says Kelly. "It was all a bit clichéd and childish. It was over-dramatic, that whole, 'Carry on like this, you won't reach 30' thing. He did carry on and he's still with us now."




Fish's notes about *Clutching At Straws*.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album. I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go, 'Fucking hell...'"

**Fish**

The album's title certainly laid bare the record's over-arching themes, referencing both alcohol and cocaine use, as well as the fact that the band were, in Fish's words, "Desperate to make a big album." The problem was that the band simply weren't getting on. One song, *That Time Of The Night*, found Fish's frustrations bubbling to the surface.

"It was my resignation statement: 'So if you ask me where do I go from here, my next destination even isn't really that clear,'" he says. "Somebody had brought some coke down to the studio and I ended up doing a couple of lines, and then suddenly I was in a bedroom, there was no alcohol, and I couldn't sleep. I actually wrote most of that lyric that night. I just felt really alienated."

"It seemed to be that the thing Fish used to love doing, he started to hate," says Rothery. "He was looking for people to blame."

The powderkeg finally exploded towards the end of the sessions. An argument flared up which ended with Fish throwing a whiskey tumbler at the guitarist.

"I stormed out and that was it," says Rothery, who says his relationship with the singer had been deteriorating since the time of *Misplaced Childhood*. "I was out of the band for 24 hours. But I wasn't really close to Fish at that point. It's unfortunate, because on a personal level we had an amazing chemistry together, but that friendship seemed to gradually dissolve."

After some hastily arranged talks to clear the air, the band pulled themselves back from the brink of self-destruction, at least temporarily, but the die had been cast.

If *Misplaced Childhood* has ended on a note of defiant positivity, by *Clutching At Straws* all that had gone. It was the hunched figure with red-rimmed eyes sat glowering in the corner of every pub, trying to drink off last night's hangover.

But it was a strangely romantic album too, one that wore its neurosis and self-pity like a badge. Occasionally, as on the chillingly prescient *White Russian* – inspired by the election of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, despite rumours of Nazi involvement during World War II – it looked up from its half-empty glass and gazed outwards to the world at large, only to recoil at what it saw.

Musically, it was Marillion's most accomplished and mature album yet. The sharp edges of their first three albums had been smoothed away, replaced by a sound that ebbed and flowed between triumph and introspection. They may still have worked by hammering together jigsaw pieces, but the likes of *Warm Wet Circles* and the tender *Sugar Mice* – inspired, as the opening lines suggest, by a day stuck in a depressing Holiday Inn in Milwaukee while the rain poured down outside – pointed towards the band's post-Fish future.

*Clutching At Straws* was released in June 1987, and peaked at No.2 on the UK album charts – one place below *Misplaced Childhood*, which had reached the top spot. The champagne corks popped, though any celebrations were soured by the mood within the band.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable," says Fish. "The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Except it hadn't, not quite. The band was certainly fracturing, but on one side was the singer and on the other was everybody else.

"I remember avoiding Fish on tour," says Kelly. "He was in 24/7 party mode. He'd say, 'Come on, let's go out.' You'd go out, but he wouldn't want you to leave. He'd make you feel like a terrible bastard for wanting to go to bed at 3am."

***Clutching At Straws*-era Marillion: the cracks were already beginning to show.**

MARILLION PRESS COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

I said, 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call saying, 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

**Fish**

From the outside, it looked like the band were flying. The first single from the album, *Incommunicado*, had reached the Top 10, while *Sugar Mice* and *Warm Wet Circles* reached the Top 40. They were playing arenas across Europe. But being a member of Marillion in 1987 through 1988 was a lonely place to be.

"I was going onstage every night and feeling like I was playing by myself," says Kelly. "I was up on this big riser away from everybody, and Ian was on this big riser across the stage. You become separated from everything. At one point, Pete said, 'I think I saw somebody up in the lighting truss during the show.' The manager said, 'Yeah, you've got 10 people up

there, operating things.'"

"We were in a bit of a bubble," adds Trewavas. "We couldn't go anywhere without security. We had to check into hotels under pseudonyms. We couldn't just go and do a soundcheck. It had to be: 'So-and-so is going to pick you up at this time, then you're going to drive around to the back of the building, that's going to take about 40 minutes.' Everything was being over-thought."

"It was just fucking draining," says Fish. "We were playing these concrete halls in Italy with shite sound, and I'd just had enough. You've got to remember, I'm going out there every night singing about how shite it is being out on the road. There was a kind of feedback loop going on. If I was singing fucking ABBA songs, it would have felt a lot better."

Everyone involved says that the problem could have been relieved if they'd been allowed to have a break from touring – and from each other. But their management was determined to keep them on the road, to the detriment of the band itself.

"These were people who had been great friends of mine," says Fish. "We were comrades. But we were so distant from each other. John Arnison should have said, 'Everybody, go away for a year – Fish, go and do some acting, Steve, go and write some soundtrack music.'"

In June 1988, a year after *Clutching At Straws* was released, Marillion played the Radrennbahn Weissensee cycling track in East Berlin in front of 95,000 people. It should have been a triumph, but things had reached the point of no return.

"The gig was incredible," says Ian Mosley. "But we came offstage and people were saying, 'I didn't really enjoy that.' That's when alarm bells went off: 'If you didn't enjoy that, then something is very wrong…'"

A month later, the band headlined Fife Aid, a poorly attended charity gig at Craigtoun Country Park in St Andrews organised by TV naturalist David Bellamy. It was, Steve Rothery recalls, "A fairly dismal day all round." They didn't know it at the time – though they may have sensed it – but it would be Fish's last gig with Marillion.

**Above: Fish was at his wits' end…**

> "Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends."
> **Fish**

"Things had started going properly wrong at the end of the *Clutching At Straws* tour," says Trewavas. "After that, there was a kind of reluctance to get together and work."

There was a last-ditch attempt to salvage things. The band began working on new material in Trewavas' garage, before eventually decamping to Dalnaglar Castle, a stately pile in Perthshire which was miles away from civilisation.

"That was a terrible mistake," says Kelly. "Not only were we not getting on, we didn't really want to be together, and we had nowhere to go."

"We went back to the same routine," says Fish. "It was the same bits going up on the fucking blackboard: this is the Joni Mitchell section, this is the Floyd section. There we were again, in the same shit."

A gulf had opened up between what the band wanted and what the singer wanted, and neither side were ready to compromise. "I don't know if he thought we weren't giving his ideas much of a try," says Trewavas. "But then some of his lyrics weren't quite what we wanted to work on, either."

The music the band recorded in Dalnaglar, and during an earlier session in Nettlebed, near Reading, wouldn't go to waste, with some of it ending up on the first two post-Fish albums *Season's End* and *Holidays In Eden*. Similarly, the singer's lyrics would re-appear on his own debut solo album, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, and the title track of its follow-up, *Internal Exile*. But, as the bassist puts it: "Something had to give." They wouldn't have long to wait before it did.

Bob Ezrin had been scoped out to

produce Marillion's next album. The American, who had worked on such landmark records Lou Reed's *Berlin*, Kiss' *Destroyer* and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, flew to the UK to meet the band.

"Bob came down to meet the band in some studio in Surrey," says Fish. "He said, 'OK, play me what you've got.' And the band played all the bits and pieces they had. And Bob said, 'There are no songs here. These are just bits.' After Bob left, the band started going, 'Alright, let's try joining this bit onto this bit.' And I just went, 'This is a waste of fucking time. I can't deal with it.'"

The singer headed to his cousin's house in Wiltshire. "I drunk a 40-fluid-oz bottle of Jim Beam on my fucking own, and I was still standing, because I was so stressed and tense."

He woke up the next morning with a clear head and made a decision that would change his life and alter the course of the band. "I wrote a five-page letter, got it photocopied at a local office suppliers and paid for a taxi driver to deliver it to everybody else's house. I basically said, 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call from management saying, 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

"Fish said he wanted 50 per cent of all the publishing and all the writing," says Mosley. "That's when it got out of hand. Everybody said, 'This has gone too far.'"

This is where memories diverge. Mark Kelly says that Fish spoke to the band's manager a few days later, suggesting that he might have made a hasty decision, something Fish refutes. But whatever happened, the outcome *was* irrefutable: Fish was no longer a member of Marillion.

Speaking separately to the rest of the band today, they all use the same word to describe the emotions they went through in the aftermath of Fish's departure: relief.

"Because things had got so difficult," says Rothery. "Fish had never really had anything to do with the writing of the music. So we knew that our musical identity was still there. We had a lot of great ideas. Maybe, slightly naïvely, we thought it would be just a case of finding someone to replace him. As if it was ever going to be that easy."

"Fish's departure was, 'OK, this is part of the process,'" says Peter Trewavas. "Don't get me wrong — it was a big thing, and we had to fill a big hole. It took us a long time to do that."

The split was bitter and nasty. Barbs were exchanged in the press, and there was a debilitating court case between the two sides. It would be a decade before they began speaking again, by which time by Fish was deep into his solo career and Marillion had reinvented themselves with their new singer, Steve Hogarth.

"We did go through a very public and very angry divorce," says Fish. "Nowadays, we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends. But to be blunt and honest about it, neither party has ever reached the commercial success we had in the 80s. But I don't miss it. I'm much happier with my lot these days."

Thirty years on, *Clutching At Straws* stands as a strangely fitting epitaph to Marillion's best-known 80s line-up in all its fractious, boozy glory. The great 'what ifs' that surround it — what if Fish had stayed, what if they'd made another album together — are the source of many a drunken argument. But in the end it's all hypothetical. Like Kerouac's Roman candle, the Fish-era line-up of Marillion was always going to fizzle out. *Slàinte Mhath*, as they say north of the border.

## HAPPY ENDING?

### How Marillion found another frontman.

How do you replace a singer like Fish? That was the question facing Marillion following the big man's departure at the end of 1988. And it was a long and involved process that nearly drove them to distraction.

"Even though the mood in the band had lifted, we knew it wasn't going to be easy getting someone in who was right for the band," recalls Mark Kelly. "Fish was a unique frontman."

The process of finding a new singer would take months. Ian Mosley remembers the band being inundated with tapes from hopefuls.

"I used to drive to our rehearsal studio from my house, and I'd play these cassettes as I drove," he says. "And I'd be going, 'No,' and I'd chuck the tape in the back seat. There was a pile of them."

The band had all manner of applicants from across the musical spectrum, from heavy metal vocalists to Fish soundalikes. "That's one thing we absolutely didn't want," says Kelly. "We wanted to move forwards rather than backwards."

While the band understandably put live shows on the backburner until they found a new frontman, they weren't completely gig-shy. In November 1988, they played a fan convention in Utrecht, Holland, where Peter Trewavas stepped up to the microphone.

"It wasn't so much singing as conducting the crowd," he said. "I mean, I love singing, but apart from anything else, if you're replacing a singer like Fish, you want to have a presence onstage, and I didn't think I was it. Somebody hiding behind an instrument wasn't going to have the effect that would be needed. So no, it was never going to be full time."

A month later the band played another fanclub gig, this time at the Royal Court Theatre in Liverpool. On this occasion, the vocalist was Dave Lloyd, formerly with Scouse rockers Nutz and Rage, whose late drummer John Mylett would be commemorated in the *Milo* section on *Misplaced Childhood*'s *Blind Curve*. "We knew the Marillion guys because Rage shared a manager, John Arnison," says Lloyd today. "We played with them a few times and got to know them well."

Lloyd sang six songs with the band: *Incommunicado*, *Kayleigh*, *Lavender*, *Heart Of Lothian*, *Garden Party* and *Market Square Heroes*. While the prospect of a bluesy singer like Lloyd joining Marillion full time is certainly intriguing on paper, today he says that there was little chance of it happening.

"If they wanted me to sing with them, nobody told me," he says. "I was just helping them out. In all honesty, I don't think my voice would have suited what they were doing."

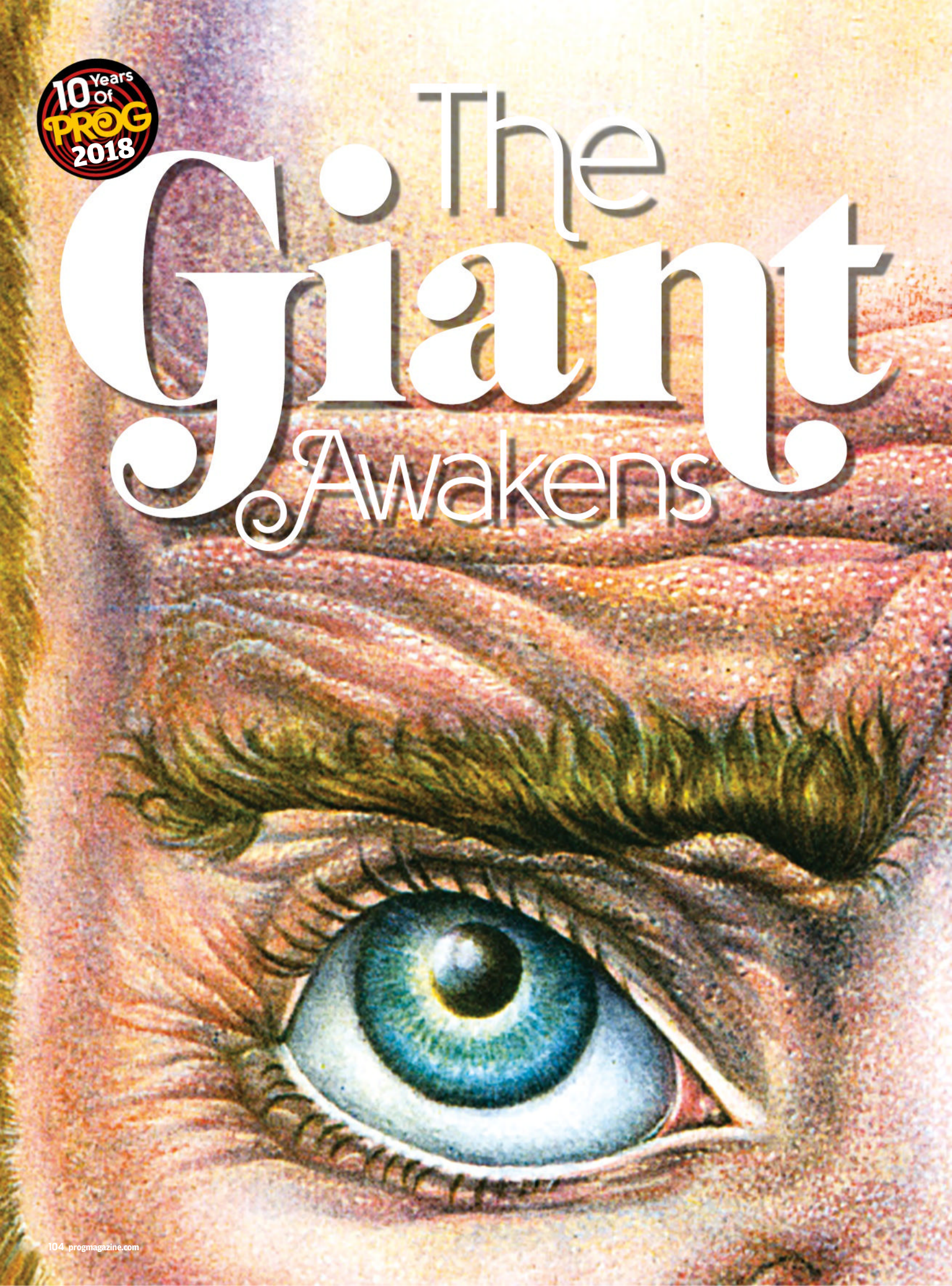
And so the search for a new singer continued. The band auditioned a number of people, but none of them fitted the bill. "There was a point where we thought, 'Will we ever find somebody?'" admits Kelly.

The tapes began piling dispiritingly up in the back of Mosley's car, until one day he popped a cassette in the deck. It was by a band called How We Live.

"It was this really striking voice," says the drummer. "Some guy named Steve Hogarth. I got to the studio and said, 'Guys, I think you might want to listen to this.' So we did, and we all know what happened next..." **DEV**

**New Kid On The Block: Steve Hogarth (left) with Mark Kelly.**

**Above: the intimate band-on-tour photos in this feature are taken from Steve Rothery's *Postcards From The Road*. See www.marillion.com for more information and to order the book.**


10 Years of PROG 2018
The Giant Awakens

*Prog* takes a trip to the south coast to witness **Gentle Giant** being inducted into the Portsmouth Hall Of Fame, and to discuss the early days with the band to mark the release of the Steven Wilson-produced *Three Piece Suite*.

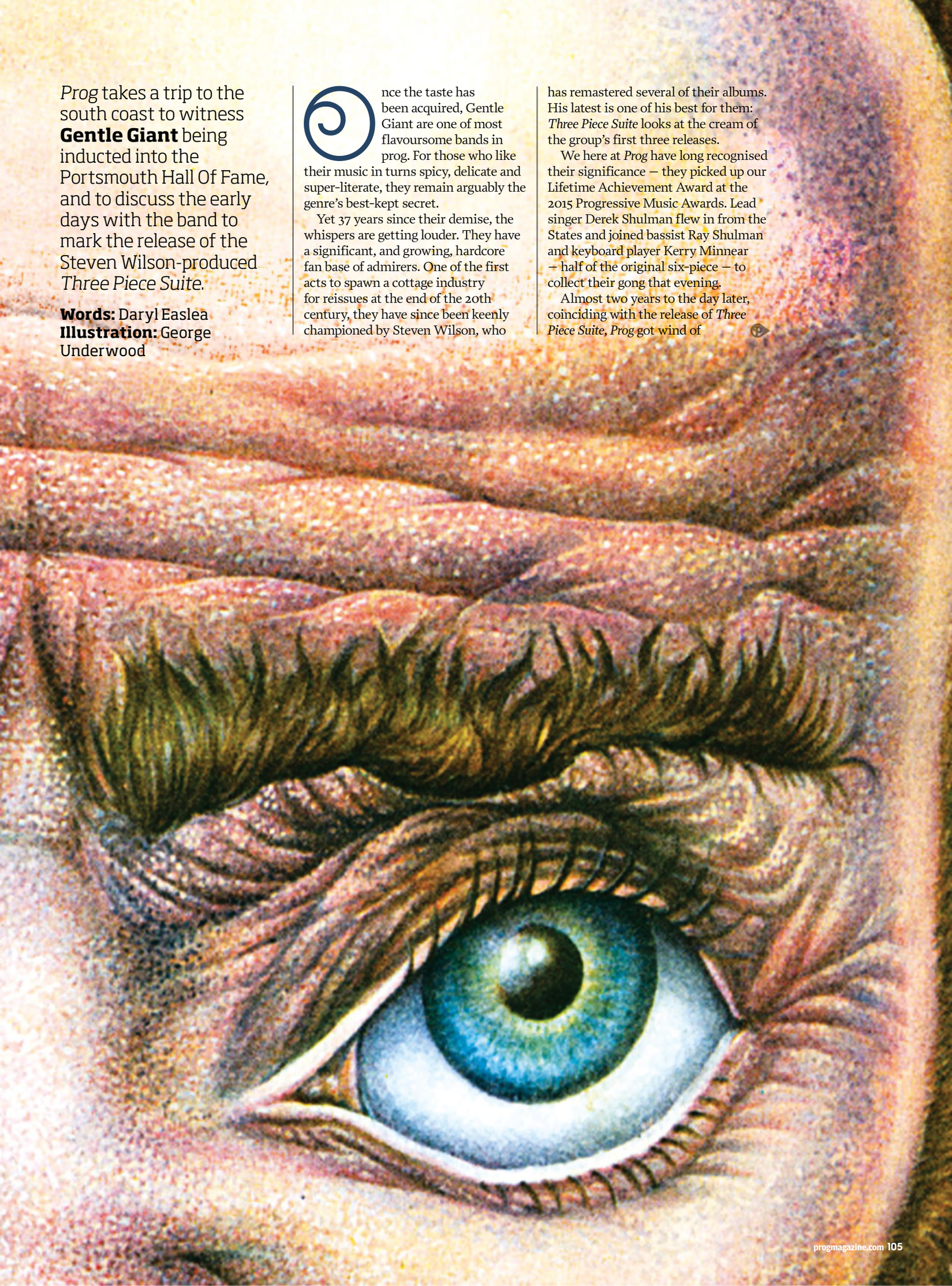
**Words:** Daryl Easlea
**Illustration:** George Underwood

Once the taste has been acquired, Gentle Giant are one of most flavoursome bands in prog. For those who like their music in turns spicy, delicate and super-literate, they remain arguably the genre's best-kept secret.

Yet 37 years since their demise, the whispers are getting louder. They have a significant, and growing, hardcore fan base of admirers. One of the first acts to spawn a cottage industry for reissues at the end of the 20th century, they have since been keenly championed by Steven Wilson, who has remastered several of their albums. His latest is one of his best for them: *Three Piece Suite* looks at the cream of the group's first three releases.

We here at *Prog* have long recognised their significance – they picked up our Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2015 Progressive Music Awards. Lead singer Derek Shulman flew in from the States and joined bassist Ray Shulman and keyboard player Kerry Minnear – half of the original six-piece – to collect their gong that evening.

Almost two years to the day later, coinciding with the release of *Three Piece Suite*, *Prog* got wind of



a *very* special event taking place in Portsmouth, the band's home town, and soon were on a fast train to the south coast. The group — and Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, their hit-making precursors — were being inducted into the Portsmouth Hall Of Fame at the Guildhall, right there in the middle of the city.

It was here in the Guildhall that the Stones, Jimi Hendrix and many others played. Davy O' List stood in for Syd Barrett when Pink Floyd played here in 1967, and it was where *Dark Side Of The Moon* was first played in its entirety five years later. It was here, too, that a 12-year-old Derek Shulman bunked off school to see The Beatles, but was caught in the queue on a Southern TV news bulletin that got him in trouble.

**This year's *Three Piece Suite*, featuring remastered tracks from the band's first three classic albums.**

## "I love *Acquiring The Taste*, I love the atmosphere of it. It feels so ethereal; it's a magic noise."
## Gary Green

At a beautifully organised and tremendously sincere event, the brothers who founded Gentle Giant — Derek, Ray and, most importantly, Phil Shulman — were together, along with founder member Kerry Minnear. This was *huge* news as Phil, the eldest brother and the group's original visionary, now a very spritely 80-year-old, hadn't been in the same room publicly with his brothers since 1973. Although Gentle Giant were to play the hall twice themselves in '74, and '75, Phil had long left the group.

Surrounded by the extended Shulman clan, it was like being at a sizeable family wedding: children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren mingled with cousins, wives, nephews, nieces and old friends from the Portsmouth music scene. Even Tony Ransley, the drummer from Simon Dupree, was there.

Gentle Giant join a Hall Of Fame that already includes other well-known

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### MIKAEL ÅKERFELDT (OPETH)

**Favourite: *Octopus***

**"I stumbled upon Gentle Giant through my record collecting in the early 90s. To this day I've never heard a band that can compete with them. Not only were they technically amazing but they delivered every note with great feel. It's quite rare to hear that within complex progressive rock. I think the full 'classic' line-up with John Weathers on drums was as close to prog perfection as you can get. The song *Peel The Paint* is a classic. There's a section in that song where the violins change modes in a falling melody. That makes me seasick, irritated, amazed. How can you write stuff like that? It's absolutely stunning!**

**"I think they started going downhill on *The Missing Piece*, but prior to that, *all* the albums are great, and some are outstanding! Prog usually doesn't have the groove that Gentle Giant had. They had *soul*." DL**

MAIN: FUTURE

**Class And Quality: Gentle Giant shot exclusively for *Prog* in Portsmouth, August 2017. L-R: Kerry Minnear, Derek Shulman, Phil Shulman, Ray Shulman.**

exponents of Pompey showbiz, Edgar Alan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Joe Jackson, Mick Jones from Foreigner and Mark King (from the Isle of Wight).

After the ceremony, *Prog* enjoys an exclusive audience with Gentle Giant. The repartee is priceless. At the start of our interview, we discuss Phil being back in the fold for the day and, just as *Prog* says, "Which is..." Derek chips in with "very sad" and Ray retorts simultaneously with "historic", which offers a remarkable insight into the fraternal dynamic of the band. Phil jokes that he feels something of an imposter in the city as "I live in *Gosport*". A cursory look at a map will tell you it's less than two miles away.

We were initially to talk about the three albums *Gentle Giant*, *Acquiring The Taste* and *Three Friends* from which *Three Piece Suite* is made, but on returning to London, we felt we should expand our article to include their ground-breaking fourth album *Octopus*, and assess Phil's years with the band as a whole. Calls were made to Wales, America and Sussex and soon our Giant tale was complete.

Hear how their first four albums – lauded, loved and, in their original Vertigo pressings, extremely collectible – are the gold standard in progressive rock, and marvel as Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, Phil, Derek and Ray, were in the clubs one moment, then on *Top Of The Pops*. Next, they're touring Scotland with the future Elton John as their keyboard player, then – as Gentle Giant – they're playing with members of the Royal Academy Of Music and being produced by Tony Visconti. It all happened very quickly. In fact, it all seemed a bit like a fable...

In the early 60s, it seemed unlikely that the Shulmans would enter a Hall Of Fame, or that Portsmouth, a vital but somewhat unloved hub on the UK's south coast, would consider opening one. The Shulman family had relocated there from Glasgow in the late 1940s. Their father, a professional musician (and sales rep by day), had been posted there during the war and realised that he wanted to move his family out of the Gorbals.

The three Shulman brothers grew up in a very musical household: youngest Ray recalls learning the trumpet at the age of five, and the violin two years later. Phil, the eldest brother, was born in 1937, eye-wateringly prehistoric for pop, and was a jazzer.

After teenage bands the Howling Wolves and the Road Runners, the brothers morphed into Simon Dupree And The Big Sound. Derek, the lead singer, 'became' Dupree.

Signed to the Arthur Howes Agency and EMI, the group were on package tours and moved quickly away from their R&B roots after hitting the post-*Pepper* UK Top 10 in 1967 with the pop-psych novelty *Kites*.

From then on, as the group chased another hit single, the returns diminished. After one too many cabaret appearances, in 1969 the Shulmans decided, as was the mood of the times, to head in an altogether jazzier, proggier direction.

"There was this whole change in the air anyway," Ray explains. "As Simon Dupree we played a gig with Cream in Bournemouth."

"We blew them off the stage," Phil says. "There was a big cultural shift in the 60s. We were that generation. The first thing Cream said when we came off: 'What are you on, lads?' Nothing – we were just a sweaty band."

"Jeff Lynne was in the Idle Race, Robert Plant was in the Band Of Joy, Robert Fripp in the League Of Gentlemen," explains Derek. "We were all going through a similar

## "Ray was the peacemaker. Phil and I were at each other's throats all the damn time!"

### Derek Shulman

Simon Dupree And The Big Sound, L-R: Eric Hine, Tony Ransley, Ray Shulman, Pete O'Flaherty, Phil Shulman, Derek Shulman.

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### NAD SYLVAN

**Favourite: *Three Friends***

**"My favourite of the early ones is a draw between *Acquiring The Taste* and *Three Friends*, I regretfully must confess! But *Three Friends* has my all-time favourite Gentle Giant track on it, the title track, because it has that spine-tingling moment in the second half, with vocal harmonies, Mellotron and organ, *and* an impossible guitar and bass riff that even loses their drummer in the end! That was Malcolm Mortimore, who made just one album with them. It's a standout in their whole catalogue.**

**"Their live version of *Peel The Paint* from *Playing The Fool* [their 1977 live album] is what made me go back and discover their earlier work. *Three Friends* was also their first self-produced record. They were in full control, and it shows." DL**

SYLVIA PITCHER/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

thing: people started to move away from pop music."

The brothers — who soon dispensed with most of the rest of the Big Sound — had a champion in manager Gerry Bron, who put them on a weekly wage, with a road crew to build their dream. It was Bron, too, who was instrumental in their new name: "Colin Richardson, a wordsmith who worked for Gerry, titled us," Phil recalls. "'You play gently and you play loud: Gentle Giant.' At first I cringed: it sounded like someone selling sweetcorn."

"We were putting the music together," Derek says. "We said, 'Call us what you like!'"

The Shulmans, along with Southampton-based drummer Martin Smith, who'd graduated from the Mojos to the Big Sound, needed some like-minded souls to accompany them on their journey. In early 1970, they were to come across Minnear by chance: "Kerry's arrival was very important to us," says Ray.

"My house was a student house and a big lad from Kerry's school in Dorset said that he knew someone who was in a band and that the poor bastard was starving," Phil says. "I told him I was interested. When he mentioned the Royal Academy, I thought, 'Well, he can't be half bad.'"

Minnear had graduated from the Academy with a degree in percussion. He had joined a band called Rust, and had been stranded in Germany when the group imploded. "I got a phone call out of the blue," he recalls. "I brought Eric Lindsey from Rust with me, as I heard they needed a guitarist."

Minnear was in. Lindsey — who now owns a music shop in South London — was not. "We told Kerry he was a great player but a crap talent scout!" says Phil.

Minnear relocated to Portsmouth and stayed with Phil and his wife Roberta for the next six months. "I wrote a lot of stuff there," he says.

A regime was established that was straightforward. "We were writing and rehearsing," Derek says. "Rehearsing all day and every day."

The next giant step for the band was to get a guitarist, and so they duly placed an ad in *Melody Maker*. In March 1970, 19-year-old blues player Gary Green was the 45th person they saw. Green was dazzled by their professionalism.

"It was another world for me — they had these guys at their beck and call," he says. "Martin Smith stood up and motioned he needed a cigarette, and Frank [Covey], the roadie, lit one and gave it to him. There was all this equipment: two 4x12 stacks for each player. I was a little bit intimidated: it was only the cannabis that kept me sane!"

He impressed the others as he was the first guitarist to tune up. "Gary was such a blues player," says Ray. "Steve Hackett is not a blues player, he plays his lines like a classical guitarist. That was what made us unique."

After a subsequent audition, Green was in, staying with Ray in Portsmouth as the band continued rehearsing and beginning to play shows – their first at the city's poly in May was billed as 'Gentle Giant featuring ace singer Simon Dupree'. The Dupree moniker would never fully leave Derek Shulman. "I was a pop star," he laughs. "I still am."

"He used to say, 'Call me Simon,'" says Phil. "Oh, he *was* Simon."

"I still *am* Simon," Derek retorts.

Brothers in pop are never the easiest of bedfellows. This billing must have been the sort of thing that caused a rift between them? "Of course!" Derek replies, relishing the moment.

"In one interview I was asked: 'What's it like having a famous brother?'" says Ray.

"I was never *that* comfortable with it," says Derek. "I had the two brothers behind me going, 'Yeah, right, you're Simon! That brought you back to earth!'"

And 'down to earth' they remained in 1970, as the gig was poorly attended, but it didn't stop them taking support slots and, importantly, playing, playing, playing.

When their much-loved debut album was released, producer Tony Visconti wrote a suitably in-era sleevenote about the group getting their heads together in their country cottage, taking you very much into their world. The truth, of course, is a tad more prosaic. "That was the time people were retreating to the country," Minnear remembers.

"We retreated to a pub!" Ray laughs.

Gentle Giant set up camp at the Cambridge Arms, just off Portsmouth's Commercial Road. The band formed a tight-knit community. "After living with Kerry and Lesley, Derek and I had a flat together for about a year," Green recalls. "We used to go bait digging and fishing; we really were in each other's pockets. It wasn't that we'd just see each other in rehearsals – we'd pop round, go for a drink, a curry afterwards, rush home to see *Monty Python*. I also stayed with Derek, Ray and Phil's mum, Becky: they'd bought her a terrace out of the proceeds of Simon Dupree. She'd cook up Arabic rice for everybody."

The band soon became a much in-demand support act: "You use what you've got. Kerry and Ray were very good musicians," Phil recalls. "Derek and I were very good showmen. On stage, we could turn something round by a grimace, or a gesture. There was a showbusiness schtick in us. Certainly an energy."

This showmanship would see them open for most of the prog hierarchy of the day, and to herald their first time at the Marquee, they supported Slade.

It was time to capture the material they had been stockpiling, and so the band went to Trident Studios in August 1970 to cut their self-titled debut. "Gerry Bron suggested Tony Visconti to produce," Derek says.

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

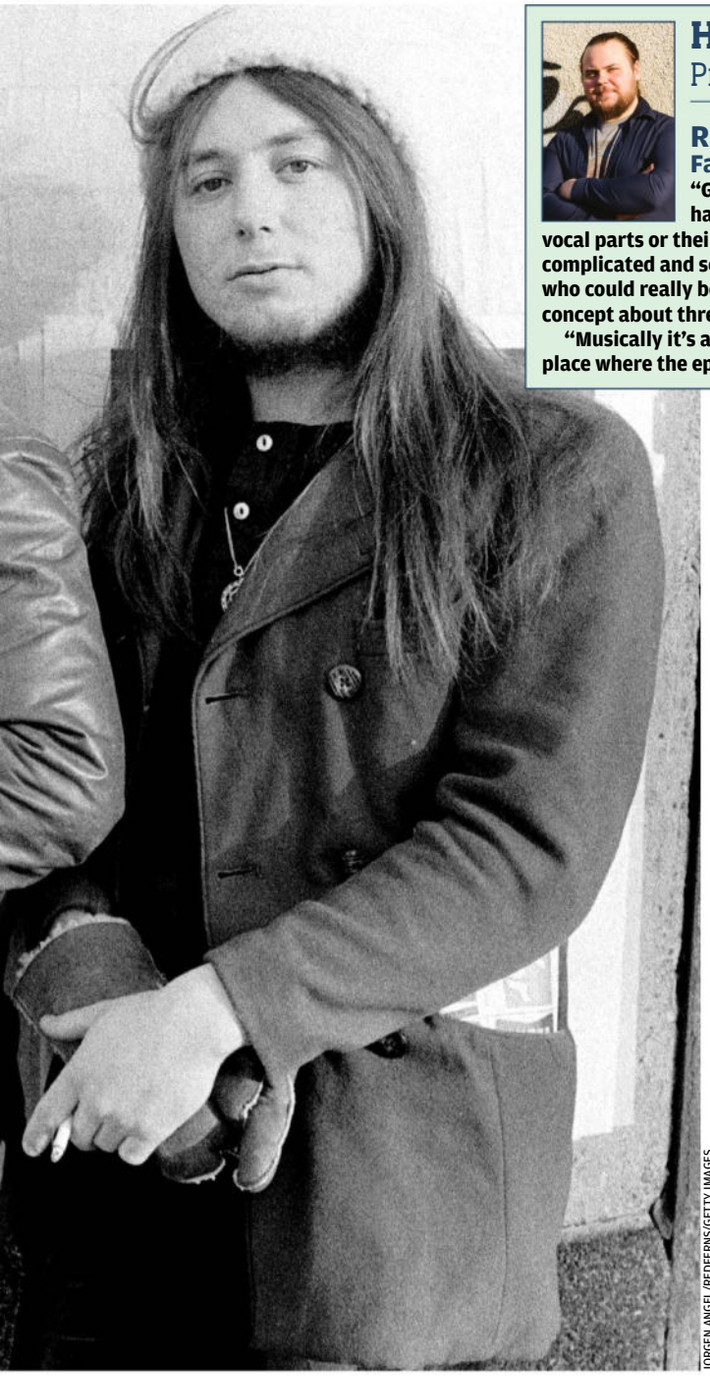
Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### ROINE STOLT (THE FLOWER KINGS/TRANSATLANTIC)

**Favourite: *Acquiring The Taste***

**"You can't really talk about the British prog scene of the 70s without mentioning Gentle Giant. The first few albums were an eye-opener for a growing underground audience. These were the days of grand creations and individualism being allowed in the music business. Gentle Giant took prog to the extreme, in a way. No other band has displayed such a diverse vision of what can be put into rock music. The truth is, Gentle Giant's music is probably more folk, classical, burlesque, vocal a cappella and chamber music than it is rock. It was all very elaborate and elevated.**

**"But *all* of their albums stand tall alongside the finest of Yes, Genesis or ELP. Gentle Giant were a treat live, too, and I got to see them twice!" DL**



JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### RIKARD SJÖBLOM (GUNGFLY/EX-BEARDFISH)

**Favourite: *Three Friends***

**"Gentle Giant are simply unique, with a sound that many – oh yes, guilty as charged! – have tried to mimic or tap into, but no one really comes close. Whether it's their intricate vocal parts or their complex instrumental workings, it's theirs and theirs alone. While their music was complicated and sophisticated, they still managed to actually rock out as well, and with a lead singer who could really belt it out! I love *Three Friends* in particular because I can particularly relate to the concept about three childhood friends who grow apart as they get older due to different circumstances.**

**"Musically it's a fantastic album, and although there are many highlights, I would probably pick the place where the epilogue hits in the title track at around 2:25... I'm a sucker for the drama!" DL**

"He lived in a scruffy little flat in Putney," Phil remembers. "We used to stay on his floor."

Visconti was another jobbing producer then: *The Man Who Sold The World* had just been released, but the whole T.Rex explosion was yet to happen. "Mick Ronson and Woody Woodmansey – the guys from Hull – used to turn up at Trident," Phil adds.

"I think Bowie turned up once, too," says Derek.

"We didn't shoo anyone away," says Phil.

Visconti had a fan in Gary Green: "I thought he was a little bit of a magician. He was a really good musician, and he really understood what we were doing."

Among the album's seven tracks that showcased their versatility, there was *Funny Ways*, always a group favourite, which highlighted their delicate, madrigal-influenced side, while the stomping *Why Not?* blared their hard-rocking intent. *Nothing At All* was their first truly standout track, moving from floating CSN-style vocal harmonies – learned while the Shulmans were in Simon Dupree – mixed with Minnear's off-the-wall Cornelius Cardew-influenced musicianship.

"The first album was the stage show, which is why there was a drum solo," says Derek. "You don't do that on an album for the most part."

"We'd never played any of those songs live," Ray says. "We did a lot of experimentation; it was very much a studio record."

"It's a moody album," Phil adds. "If you look at the lyrics, you can't pin down what it's about. I went through an art book and got ideas from that – *The Moon Is Down*, for instance: the moon doesn't come down, the moon goes up! It's a surreal album. I really like it. *Black Cat* was a tribute to William Blake's *Tyger Tyger Burning Bright*."

It was these concepts that set Gentle Giant apart. Phil, who'd taught art at Eastney Secondary Modern Boys' School, was full of ideas and happy to put them into songs. And, of course, there were a lot of references to giants.

"François Rabelais [author of the *Gargantua And Pantagruel* series of novels], the giant bit, I read that before it was popular because it's filthy! I looked for anything coarse! The warm goose neck, a wonderful way of wiping your arse. I tried to turn that into a song."

With its sleeve a reference to licking the backside of the music business, there was a factor at play that similar prog groups didn't have: cynicism.

"The Shulmans had one bite of the apple, but now they wanted a bigger one," Green recalls. "Phil certainly had his eyes wide open about this ruthless, cut-throat business. He wasn't

> "There was a *lot* of sibling rivalry. Phil, the older brother, was our kind of gangmaster in a way. Derek was the singer and had a lot to say for himself. Ray was gentle: the youngest, nearest to my age. There was obviously a dynamic between the three of them that I just did not understand."
>
> **Malcolm Mortimore**

**Gentle Giant in January 1972. Back row, L-R: Kerry Minnear, Derek Shulman, Phil Shulman, Gary Green. Front: Malcolm Mortimore, Ray Shulman.**

**A Giant Leap: the band's self-titled 1970 debut album.**

"Like it or not, it was still rock'n'roll that had to be performed," adds Phil.

*Gentle Giant* appeared with little fanfare in November 1970. With its sleeve designed by David Bowie's school friend George Underwood, it was melodic, quirky and loaded with gravitas.

"People said *Gentle Giant* didn't do that well, but it did okay," Derek says. "It certainly wasn't a big chart burner, but it got our name on the map and enabled us to make another record."

Visconti was to return for the next album, too, recorded at AIR and Advision in the first months of 1971. *Acquiring The Taste*, released that July, has become the connoisseur's Giant album. "I love *Acquiring The Taste*, I love the atmosphere of it. It feels so ethereal; it's a magic noise," Green says.

gonna let naivety through the door, and we'd got the thick skin."

"People were now getting intrigued by whatever the hell it was we were doing," says Derek.

There was someone who wasn't intrigued, however. Gerry Bron decided amicably to move on. "Gerry hated *Acquiring The Taste*," Ray says. "Well, he would!"

"He didn't know what to do with it, did he?" Minnear reveals.

"He was having success with Uriah Heep, more traditional rock groups," Ray explains. "I think he thought after our first record, we'd go more in that direction."

In came World Wide Artists (WWA), the father and son team of Pat Meehan Snr and Jr to look after the group's affairs. Derek and Phil constantly looked for opportunities to build the group's success: one of the first things WWA did was to look at better exposure for the group in America. They signed to Columbia, as the Meehans understood the size and scale of the market.

There was to be another change – drummer Martin Smith was out. "Martin's playing was a bit 'tappy' for Phil," Green recalls. "Martin loved traditional jazz – if he'd been offered to play with Kenny Ball, that would have been his gig."

An advert was placed in *Melody Maker*, and Malcolm Mortimore was selected. "Even though I was just 18, I'd been playing the drums for a little while," Mortimore says. "I was in Train with [future Damned guitarist] Brian James, who'd opened for King Crimson. I was keen to get out in the biz."

After an audition at the Roebuck pub, in Tottenham Court Road, and a second in Portsmouth, Mortimore received "a telegram from World Wide Artists informing me I had got a place in the 'very talented musical group called Gentle Giant'. That's when I knew who I'd joined."

"Malcolm played incredible stuff," says Green. "Everything, all the time, all in one song. He was the best of the bunch."

Mortimore went down to Portsmouth and slept on a mattress on the floor at the Minnears' home. After a week's rehearsal, Giant were out again playing shows, supporting Jethro Tull in Europe. "We were well-received," Mortimore recalls. "They loved the grandiose nature of it all."

It was also time, thanks to their incredible work ethic, to return to the studio. The time with Visconti had been pleasurable, but, as Green says, "We could produce ourselves. Anything went."

It cemented the close relationship with engineer Martin Rushent who, a decade later, would be the feted producer of the Human League's *Dare*.

"We became really chummy," Green continues. "We just fell into lockstep with him – he was as mad as we were."

After the Tull shows in January 1972, the group began sessions for *Three Friends*, a concept album about schoolmates taking different paths in life, at the recently opened Command Studios in Piccadilly.

> "We were plonked together with Sabbath a fair bit. It was an odd combination, but I think it did us more good than harm in the long run in terms of exposure."
> **Kerry Minnear**

***Three Friends*, the band's third album, released in 1972.**

One of the key songs on *Three Friends* was *Peel The Paint*, which includes a three-minute improvised drum and guitar solo from Mortimore and Green.

"Phil told Malcolm to 'Go out there and make a noise,'" Green recalls. "We both played at the same time. I'd borrowed Mike Ratledge's Echoplex [Green's brother Jeff was a Soft Machine roadie]; it was totally improvised. We had an outline – start loud, get a bit quiet and then end up loud. That was as far as it went."

"It's a nice little album," says Minnear.

"People were listening in," adds Phil.

Mortimore began adapting to the group's funny ways: "There was a *lot* of sibling rivalry. Phil, the older brother, was our kind of gangmaster in a way. Derek was the singer and had a lot to say for himself. Ray was gentle, the youngest, nearest to my age. There was obviously a dynamic between the three of them that I just did not understand."

"It's funny really, Phil. Did we disagree at any time?" wonders Derek.

"Not a lot," Phil replies.

"Ray was the peacemaker," says Derek. "Phil and I were at each other's throats all the damn time!"

"It was always like the Marx Brothers," adds Green. "They were indeed huge fans. Phil would always talk about Marx Brothers movies."

In March 1972, Mortimore was involved in a serious motorcycle accident. "I broke my arm and leg, and cracked my pelvis. I was lucky I didn't total myself."

A tour was pending and so a replacement was needed. After considering ex-King Crimson drummer Mike Giles, Ray called up recent Grease Band drummer John 'Pugwash' Weathers. When in Eyes Of Blue, Weathers had supported Simon Dupree in South Wales in 1966 and they'd stayed in touch. In 1970 they'd shared a bill when he was playing with Graham Bond.

"I went down to Portsmouth for a knockabout. They liked it and offered me the job temporarily," Weathers recalls. "It was pretty obvious that I could pick up things quickly. After a couple of weeks, they asked if I fancied taking it on."

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### JON POOLE (LIFESIGNS/EX-CARDIACS)

**Favourite: *Three Friends***

**"Gentle Giant were one of many big influences on Tim Smith in Cardiacs so they're definitely in my DNA too. On the Cruise To The Edge things that I've done with Lifesigns, we all became very tight with 'Three Friends', the sort-of current version of the band. It features Gary Green and Malcolm Mortimore, who are both salt-of-the-earth geezers. I like them a lot. Malcolm gets the whole punk thing too. He's mates with Rat Scabies from The Damned! They're not fussed about the whole prog label. They're good lads!**

**"That's the album that Malcolm Mortimore played on. Did you know he used to be in Kilburn And The High Roads with Ian Dury?" DL**

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### FRANZ DI CIOCCIO (PFM)

**Favourite: *Gentle Giant***

**"We liked Gentle Giant because they were very creative. In some ways their approach to music was similar to ours: they mixed many sounds and languages – classical, jazz and the folk music of their own country... and rock as the glue! At the time of their first three albums, we became friends and we would spend time together during their Italian concerts. They were successful in Italy and both the audiences and the press appreciated them a lot.**

**"Some of the songs I love most are *Funny Ways* and *Alucard* from their first album, and *Pantagruel's Nativity* from the second. The Giants were always trying to be creative and innovative. That's how they surprised their audience." DL**

JORGEN ANGEL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Giant Steps: Derek Shulman live on stage in Copenhagen, January 1972.

GEMS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

The Boys In The Band, L-R: Gary Green, Ray Shulman, Derek Shulman, John Weathers, Kerry Minnear.

"I went to see them," Mortimore says. "I was in a wheelchair. They were keen to keep working, keep as tight as they could. Phil called me up and said 'Malcolm, I'm sorry to say this, you're fitting in really well, but John's got to stay.' I said, 'Alright, that's it' – they were off to America and that was that."

Like Phil Collins in Genesis, Weathers was ideal for Giant. The band were booked to promote *Three Friends* in the US, but prior to that, WWA had got them the strange gig of supporting the new Jimi Hendrix film, *Jimi Plays Berkeley*, around the UK.

"We'd do about 40 minutes, clear the stage, the screen would come down and they'd show the film," Weathers recalls. "It was a very strange setup. But after we'd seen the movie once, we didn't need to hang around."

WWA also looked after the interests of Black Sabbath, and Giant often supported Ozzy's legendary crew. "We were plonked together with Sabbath a fair bit," Minnear recalls. "It was an odd combination, but I think it did us more good than harm in the long run in terms of exposure."

"Black Sabbath had their portentous opening music – whenever they'd hear that, the Shulmans, especially Phil, would sing *'one meatball and no spaghetti'* – they had a very dry sense of humour," remembers Mortimore.

On August 24, 1972, Giant began a North American tour with Sabbath. "The only hangover from Simon Dupree was stagecraft," Ray recalls. "A Sabbath audience was *not* a Gentle Giant audience. But I think we knew how to sell it, almost by exaggeration in a way: you *will* like this because we are performing it like this. We were never being serious musos – 'Look at our virtuosity' – it was always a question of, 'We'll entertain you, so you'll enjoy it.'"

> "We were never being serious musos – 'Look at our virtuosity' – it was always a question of, 'We'll entertain you, so you'll enjoy it.'"
> **Ray Shulman**

Sweet Stuff: 1971's *Acquiring The Taste*.

There was one notorious night at the Hollywood Bowl on September 15. "All the Columbia hierarchy were there," Derek recalls. "Before we went on, I got into a row with a bloke who said I was looking at his girlfriend, and he sprayed a water pistol at me."

"I said we should extend the things like *Peel The Paint*, and do about four numbers, real heavy stuff. But oh no. We thought, 'This is Los Angeles, they've got to be broad-minded musically.' *Wrong*!" says Weathers.

The audience could take no more madrigal: at the start of *Funny Ways*, firecrackers were thrown onstage. "One almost blew my shoes off!" Phil recalls. "I asked 15,000 people for a fight."

"It was what you called them…" Minnear says.

"A bunch of cunts?" Phil says.

"They sat quite quietly," Minnear remembers. "It was my teacher's voice. 'Now *don't* do that again!'"

"We finished the set," Weathers says. "That was about the worst reception we ever got."

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE…

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### TIM BOWNESS (NO-MAN)

**Favourite: *Three Friends***

**"As with all the band's albums between 1970 and 1976, there's a constant sense of invention and discovery in the music on the first few, which effortlessly incorporates classical, rock, jazz and R'n'B elements. They brilliantly combined aspects of the past, like the baroque flourishes and the subtle modern jazz quartet touches, the then-present *and* a taste of things to come, through Gary Green's wonderfully knotty and echoed guitar parts.**

**"It's almost impossible to choose between *Three Friends* and *Acquiring The Taste* for me, but due to its unusual concept and the presence of the exquisite *Schooldays*, my favourite ever Gentle Giant song, *Three Friends* just about edges it." DL**

Their next US tour with Yes and the Eagles was another strange experience. However, redemption was to come in the form of the final American jaunt of the year, back again with Jethro Tull, a simpatico band and audience.

"We were very compatible," Weathers says. "We'd go down an absolute storm — they were perfect for us, as that was the music that the audience were there for."

Recorded at Advision at the end of July 1972, *Octopus* was released that December. From its eye-catching Roger Dean cover onwards, it set the bar high for what prog rock should be: complex, intelligent, with a warm heart. What made the album so different? "Me!" Weathers laughs.

Minnear agrees: "John's solid approach changed the way we sounded as a band and the way we wrote. We could be more rhythmically adventurous with such a strong foundation. We were settling into our identity as a band and what characteristics were unique to us."

Weathers introduced Minnear to James Brown's music. "I played him *Sex Machine* and he thought it was brilliant, because he got it — suddenly, he just took off on it and started writing all these beautiful rhythmic pieces and doing all the clavinet stuff. Although he had a degree in percussion, he couldn't rock!"

"In the end, of all the albums we released, the cutest songs are on *Octopus*," Phil says.

"It was the zenith of Phil's time in the band," Derek says.

"I think *Octopus* as an album sounds confident both in the playing and in the way its recorded," muses Minnear. "Even if the original idea of a concept album based on the characters in the band — a bit like Elgar's *Enigma Variations* — didn't materialise, each track seemed to develop confidently in its own right."

"John's drumming makes the music appear — and I say 'appear' purposely — simpler," says Green.

"*Octopus* was heavier prog, as it were," Weathers says. "We were rocking a lot more. Kerry and Ray had come up with some very good tunes, some good ideas from Phil."

"The lyrical content fitted the music absolutely brilliantly," says Green. "I'd heard some of Yes and Genesis — they were too far out for me. We all liked something a bit more real that you could get your teeth into — we were a bit more of a working-class prog band than the others. Even though we had highfalutin concepts: RD Laing, Camus and Rabelais, they made more real-life sense to me. We were a bit more down in the dirt."

As 1973 dawned, and the release date loomed for *Octopus* in America, the single most significant shift in Gentle Giant's decade-long history occurred — Phil Shulman, ideas man, gangmaster, left the band. Of course, it wasn't just music — it was family too. Today, Phil is reflective: "It's done. It's history."

"To tour, and to record, took an immense amount of time and energy and forward thinking," Derek says. "It was very difficult for Phil."

"Believe me, had I been a single man, it would have been a different situation altogether," Phil says. "But I wasn't, and I had to remind myself of that."

"It was difficult for him and it was difficult for us, but the fact is, we decided to continue, even though it was tough for Ray and I — this is our brother," Derek says.

"We were very unsure if we could continue," Ray adds.

"We were pretty close," says Phil.

"We are again now," says Derek.

"His wife was in her 30s, with two young children," Weathers says. "He was homesick, whereas we were all in our mid-20s. Phil, being 10 years older, didn't have what the Welsh call 'hwyl' — a mood, a fervour to be on tour. Phil had said he was thinking about leaving, then he didn't, then he said it again, and didn't.

"When we were on our Italian tour, Pat Meehan Snr got Phil in and said that we'd had enough — 'Are you leaving or are you not!?' Phil said, 'I'm leaving.' Pat said goodbye and that was that. He didn't have any chance to change his mind. Derek and Ray had their heads in their hands. We still had the writers — what was the point in finishing?"

"Phil was the first director of the band — he established its moral authority," says Green. "We made the bulk of the sound, we were the noise. We became a harder-edged band."

There's no doubting the importance of Phil Shulman to Gentle Giant. In a way, his work was done. The band returned to work quickly: by March they were back on the road in America, promoting *Octopus*.

"I'm naturally quite lazy so when Phil left, I probably moaned inwardly that I would now have to learn to play the missing trumpet and sax parts on one of my seven unpredictable keyboards," Minnear suggests. "Phil was missed as a lyricist and general 'envisioner'. We got on with the job of writing *In A Glass House* in the same manner as previous projects, by me and Ray writing music and sharing ideas and Derek getting involved with vocals and lyrics as things moved along."

"We were all young, all out there and enjoying it all," Weathers says. "Derek was now the leader of the pack: we used to take the mickey out of him something terrible. He used to take it all so seriously at times!"

Poised to make headway in America as a five-piece, and depart from Vertigo, that's where we wind up our tale. So, on reflection, how were the first 25 months of Gentle Giant?

"As a band we were possibly at our most comfortable and stress-free, and looking back through rose-tinted glasses, I'm pretty sure we were a happy bunch," Minnear concludes.

"We weren't chasing anything — we just wanted to do something a bit different," Derek adds. "Did we want to make a living? Yes! Did we want to be really big? Of course! But it was more than that. We enjoyed composing, playing and learning music. We were surrounded by great players and learning all the time. Even in the times when supposedly the albums became more pop, we were still learning."

Ah, the time when the albums went pop — but that's another tall story, and one that we shall tell at some point in the future...

**Squid's in: the hugely influential *Octopus*.**

## HOW I ACQUIRED THE TASTE...

Prog stars discuss their favourite of Gentle Giant's first four albums.

### BENEDIKT MOMRAK (TUSMØRKE)

**Favourite: *Acquiring The Taste***

**"The first album I heard was *The Power And The Glory* and I absolutely *hated* it! [Laughs] But then I bought *Acquiring The Taste* and that was a lot closer to what I liked. There weren't so many horns! Gentle Giant used so many interesting sounds to illustrate moments in their songs. They made it sound easy. They never broke a sweat, even when they were playing wildly complicated things. The song I always dug the most was *Wreck*. I've included it in my DJ sets many times. I even suggested it as a cover song, but the other guys laughed at me and said it was a sea shanty! But it's an *incredible* song.**

**"*Acquiring*... was my first Gentle Giant love. *Three Friends* is possibly a superior album, objectively speaking, but *Acquiring The Taste* has a special place in my heart." DL**

## "In the end, of all the albums we released, the cutest songs are on *Octopus*."

**Phil Shulman**

# The Charge Of The Light Brigade

There are no January blues for **Steve Hackett**: he's about to drop his 26th album, and later on this year will head out on the road as Genesis Revisited, and to celebrate the 40th anniversary of his solo album, *Spectral Mornings*. The prolific guitarist talks Brexit, the joys of contrast and communication, and just why he thinks Genesis' music is still so alive...

**Words:** Dom Lawson **New Portraits:** Carsten Windhorst

We can't prove it, but we're roughly 86% sure that someone has popped a couple of massive Duracell batteries into Steve Hackett's back. Perhaps due to the Genesis legend's affable and unassuming demeanour, the insane levels of activity that the 68-year-old has been putting in over the last decade (and many years before that) are seldom remarked upon with the intensity they deserve. Seemingly on the road more often than not but prolific in the studio too, he has slowly but stubbornly re-established himself as one of the prog world's most vital forces. Whether playing classic Genesis material or his own successful recent solo material (2017's *The Night Siren* was a Top 30 hit in the UK album charts), Hackett is riding a unique wave of accomplishment and creativity that has been a joy to witness.

A new year brings the release of Steve Hackett's 26th solo album, *At The Edge Of Light*. As with most of his recent records, it's a bewildering but endlessly fascinating tour-de-force of progressive ideas, spinetingling melodies and bravura musicianship, delivered by a list of rock, prog and world music luminaries, with Hackett sharing the spotlight with typical humility. Almost certain to emulate *The Night Siren*'s unexpected chart success, it's an album that Hackett seems to feel he has plucked from the ether, as inspiration arrived from all directions.

"Well, the album came out of conversations and it's influenced by *everything*," he notes. "Each time I sit down and think about making a new album, it's a daunting task. I think, 'So people *really* liked the last one... oh dear!' But it all starts with a doodle, a bit of an idea, something that's unformed. If you can hang on to the spirit that informs any one particular song and not get hidebound with the *form* of it, not get too involved with the construction, that's the key. Of course you've got to play the right notes and bring all the nuts and bolts together that the machine requires, but beyond that you've got be to thinking, 'What's the *idea* of this one, in the end? What's this song about?'"

"I'm cautiously optimistic about the world's future! I have to believe that we'll pull ourselves out of the current nosedive."

**Steve Hackett, shot exclusively for *Prog* in December 2018, holding his faithful 1957 Gibson Les Paul.**

The most obvious result of this approach to composition is that *At The Edge Of Light* sounds unlike anything else happening in music right now. At times mischievously esoteric, with sounds ranging from the expected wall of guitars to sitar, cimbalom and (as Hackett notes with a chuckle) "drums put through a Marshall cabinet", the album boasts many changes of mood, but the overriding feel is one of wide-eyed joy at music's kaleidoscopic potential.

"There's no reverential thinking here. Everything is grist for the mill," Hackett says. "So many things appear in cameo, to be replaced by something else. There's a tight turnover of events and that's exciting. Whether it's film music, classical, big band stuff or jazz, I feel that when I make an album I've got to honour all those gods, those influences, and I've got to go with those things that moved people to play in the first place. That's the legacy of having worked with Genesis. If you can make all those things happily co-exist within the same album, why not? It's a case of, 'Dare I put this in? Will I get away with it?'"

**2017's *The Night Siren*.**

***At The Edge Of Light*. Reviewed on page 103!**

> "Chris Squire asked me to join Yes when we were working together. I was extremely flattered for about five minutes, thinking that I could have 'Guitarist for Genesis *and* Yes!' on my CV."

And does he think he will?

"Well I think there's something for everyone on this one. If you're familiar with what we've been doing, there'll always be things that are typically progressive and there will be something like a simple, 60s-style pop song like *Hungry Years*. I want to be controversial and say that it owes as much to Peter, Paul & Mary as it does to Clannad or The Beatles. There's nothing remotely progressive about it whatsoever, but that's the whole point: to not be afraid of contrasts. Not everything has to be an impenetrable equation. Contrasts are the best that the prog stuff has to offer."

**Yes man? Hackett and Chris Squire.**

MAURIZIO & ANGELA VICEDOMINI/PRESS

From the folksy gloom and soaring leads of *Beasts Of Our Time* and the blues-tinged clangour of *Underground Railroad* to its dazzling three-part finale, *Descent/Conflict/Peace*, *At The Edge Of Light* covers so much musical ground that, in less capable hands, it could've been a complete mess. Instead, it borders on a connoisseur's guide to prog, both ancient and modern, replete with one song — *Under The Eye Of The Sun* — that boasts glorious vocal harmonies straight out of the Yes handbook.

"Yeah that's funny because when those harmonies kick in, it's really just one bloke and one girl," Hackett grins. "It's me and Amanda [Lehmann]. One reviewer said that it sounded like Crosby, Stills & Nash… not to mention Young! [Laughs] But it's funny, because Jon Anderson has that androgynous quality to his voice, so there are times when there's that whole other octave that I want to reach, and I think if you track up the vocals thickly enough it does end up sounding a little Yes-like.

"You know, Chris Squire asked me to join Yes when we were working together," he says. "I was extremely flattered for about five minutes, thinking that I could have 'Guitarist for Genesis *and* Yes!' on my CV, but in the end I felt that Yes were very well served by a whole legion of great guitarists, most of whom I've worked with at some point! So that was a great compliment from Chris. But there's an aspect of what I do where I think, 'Well, if I *had* been working with Chris, that's just the sort of song I might've presented to him!' In all our thoughts, those of us who have been influenced by the great Chris Squire and his mega bass playing, it's hard to pick up a Rickenbacker and not think of the wonderful things that he did with it. So in spirit, I'm *always* talking to Chris."

One specific example of Chris Squire's now-distant but essential influence on Hackett's musical life is that the much-missed legend cannily foresaw his fellow musician's large-scale orchestral endeavours. According to Hackett, Squire once pointed out that he was the only guitarist he knew with a sufficiently robust ego that genuinely enjoyed the idea of being surrounded by so many musicians.

"I might be doing a disservice to a few people here, but that's truthfully what he said. I said, 'Yeah, I don't feel threatened by it. We're all string players. We're all musicians first of all and we all make a noise for a living and that's what binds us.' It's safety in numbers and a case of 'Why the hell not?' I know Chris loved choral stuff and I have those aspects on this album, too. The solo singing, harmony singing, choral, gospel, improvised, fixed lines, it's all there. They're all different approaches and all designed to throw you off the scent, so if you say, 'Well I don't like *that* particular thing…' well, here's another one!"

Perhaps more so even than its much-hailed predecessors, *At The Edge Of Light* is an album that celebrates creative cooperation. A quick glance down the album's roll call reveals contributions from Nick D'Virgilio (Big Big Train/ex-Spock's Beard), Jonas Reingold (Flower Kings/Karmakanic), Simon Phillips (The Who/Toto), Pink Floyd vocalists Durga and Lorelei McBroom, sitar guru Sheema Mukherjee, saxophonist Rob Townsend and, of course, Hackett's brother John, a mainstay of his live and studio work for decades. With several other eclectic protagonists thrown into the mix, it's very much an album of ensemble and individual performances, all tastefully glued together with Hackett's low-key charisma, elegant vocals and scorching leads. A heroic team effort, if you will.

"Oh yes, it's all about the team and about *everyone*," says Hackett. "I don't take every solo. Whether I should take more or fewer solos, it all depends. If you're coming from a heavy metal angle, you'd probably say there was a dearth of guitar solos on the album. Coming from the point of view from a pop songwriter, you'd say there was far too much guitar! But it's what other people bring to it that makes the difference. And I find it *amazing*, the skills that others exhibit."

It's not hard to see how the late blossoming of Steve Hackett's solo career has stemmed from his own delight at all the incredible musicians that are, unsurprisingly, eager to get involved. As he describes it, the long journey from adolescent dreaming in the 60s to nailed-on icon status

Steve Hackett with the Dobro guitar he used for *Underground Railroad* on his new album.

WILL IRELAND/FUTURE

**Hackett live with the orchestra on his recent tour. An army of generals!**

has been fuelled by a deep and profound fascination with what other musicians can do and how that, in turn, could make his own music bigger, better and more enduring.

"Many of these people are used to playing in improvised forms, perhaps much more than me," Hackett says. "I came out of a school of songwriters and I just happened to be a guitarist. The emphasis is slightly different. In the 1960s, I used to advertise myself as a blues guitarist and harmonica player, Blind Lemon Hackett! The blues boom had died on me by the end of the 1960s, music was on the change and was due to become fully comprehensive by the start of the 70s, and so, luckily, that's when I met Genesis. But, as I say, other people are very important to me and what they bring to it. We did the tour with the orchestra and it was like a small army onstage – it was about 50 people all going at it! How can that possibly be a solo performance? It just isn't."

whether it's some Philharmonic Orchestra or a collection of 20, 30 or 40 people that I might have on an album. It's *always* an orchestra. We might track people up 100 times in order to get the best out of them. But it's an army of generals, really. I guess I function the way Jeff Lynne has done with ELO, where it's a small team that's usually tracked up to sound like a very *big* team. If an orchestra's name is on the flyer, that's great, but didn't a lot of these progressive bands already sound like an orchestra in the first place?"

One of prog's most reliably adventurous souls, Steve Hackett has always assimilated a dizzying array of disparate influences into his music. It's clear evidence of an open-minded approach to life that is also reflected in his lyrics. Often world-weary but never devoid of hope, Hackett's worldview is another element that makes his music so inclusive. On *At The Edge Of Light*, the grim spectres of war, conflict, social division and needless suffering all loom large amid the record's darker moments, and while he is reluctant to stick his head above the parapet to make specific political declarations, it doesn't take a genius to work out where he stands on the likes of Trump, Brexit and the rise of the far-right.

"I suppose I have to preface this by saying that I'm cautiously optimistic about the world's future!" he laughs. "I have to believe that we'll pull ourselves out of the current nosedive. We've got all this wonderful technology and all this knowledge, and it seems that populist thinking is going to lead us back to the caves, if not back to war. I think there are several songs on the album that address that. You can't pretend these things aren't happening. The truth is that *no* international musician wants Brexit. Why would you want to go back to the days of carnets and delays at airports and not being sure that you can show up for a show, because that's how it was back in the early days? I remember we cancelled Genesis shows in Italy because we couldn't get the truck across the border. Do we want those days again? No. So I am critical and I am angry."

So does it feel even more important, at this precise moment in time, that *At The Edge Of Light* is such a proudly international record?

"Yes, it's an international album. I can't help that. I've tried to make it all bucket and spade, but it won't wash! As soon as you start taking a bite of a pizza, you become a European. If you're gonna be a true Euro-sceptic, then sorry, no more pizzas, no more coq au vin… it's fish and chips for you, if you're lucky!"

Does this album feel like a protest of sorts? It's certainly unequivocal about rejecting much of what's happening around the world at the moment.

"You know what, I noticed just the other day, I'd been into one shop to have a coffee and then into another shop to buy a new pair of shoes. We'd just had all the celebrations about commemorating the end of the First World War, and I noticed that in both places they were playing Dylan songs. *Blowin' In The Wind* was high on the agenda! It is the quintessential protest song and I've been saying for a while that the protest song as a genre is ever more necessary. I don't think that the Vietnam war would have ended if American students hadn't taken matters in hand themselves. It was about *communication*."

> "Music changed the world – let's not forget this. And I think it can change the world again, for the better."

If you saw Steve Hackett's Genesis Revisited: Band with Orchestra tour earlier in 2018, you won't require any further evidence that the guitarist is thoroughly enjoying expanding and exploring the more ambitious end of his repertoire. Today, he admits that the experience has fed directly into *At The Edge Of Light*: not in terms of specific orchestral embellishments, although there are plenty of those too, but more in terms of providing a fresh perspective on what is generally some very complex music.

"Playing with the orchestra was inspiring. Just the challenge of seeing if you can pull it off, you know?" he notes. "But because I'm thinking globally and thinking about comprehensive and inclusive music that includes all known genres and every corner of the globe, one is *naturally* working with orchestras,

Communication is at the heart of everything Hackett does: communication between artist and fans, and between one musician and countless others. It might sound like old hippie nonsense, but advocating an ethos of peace, love and hope is something to be saluted. As he points out, it's just a shame that the world has taken such an ominous turn, making troubled but emotionally uplifting records like *At The Edge Of Light* all the more necessary.

"You'd think that world leaders wouldn't have to get to this point again," he states. "But I do feel that, for instance, refugees have been so demonised and are getting a rum deal. I think the whole concept of countries is completely outdated when you have technologies that enable people to work together, in much the same way that this album was constructed. I recorded Durga and Lorelei and others at my home studio, but equally Jonas and the drummers were sending their performances in, so there were no borders for those people."

Steve Hackett: a man of peace.

TINA KORHONEN/PRESS

Despite the daily horror of the news, Steve Hackett is definitely having fun. *At The Edge Of Light* will emerge in January, presaging yet another extensive tour that takes in most of Europe, Canada and an impressive 20 dates in the UK. There aren't many rock veterans putting in that level of effort at this stage in their careers, but then most musicians aren't as profoundly happy with their lot as Steve Hackett. Thrilled to be both a relevant, contemporary musician *and* guardian of the Genesis catalogue, he simply can't wait to get back out there.

"I'm advertising that I will be playing *Selling England By The Pound* in its entirety, plus most of *Spectral Mornings*, plus new stuff and extra Genesis, too!" he beams. "So there's a lot to rehearse, put it that way. But I'm looking forward to it with absolute relish, in order to serve the best of the past, the present and the future. It's quite a task! But it's got to be done. I've got a terrific band that will involve all the guys that were onstage last time. We're going for a change of drummer — we have Craig Blundell, who'll be doing the majority of the gigs next year, but also some gigs with Marco Minnemann, who's going to be doing the two cruises we're doing. They're all great players, as indeed is Gary [O'Toole]. I'm looking forward to it all tremendously."

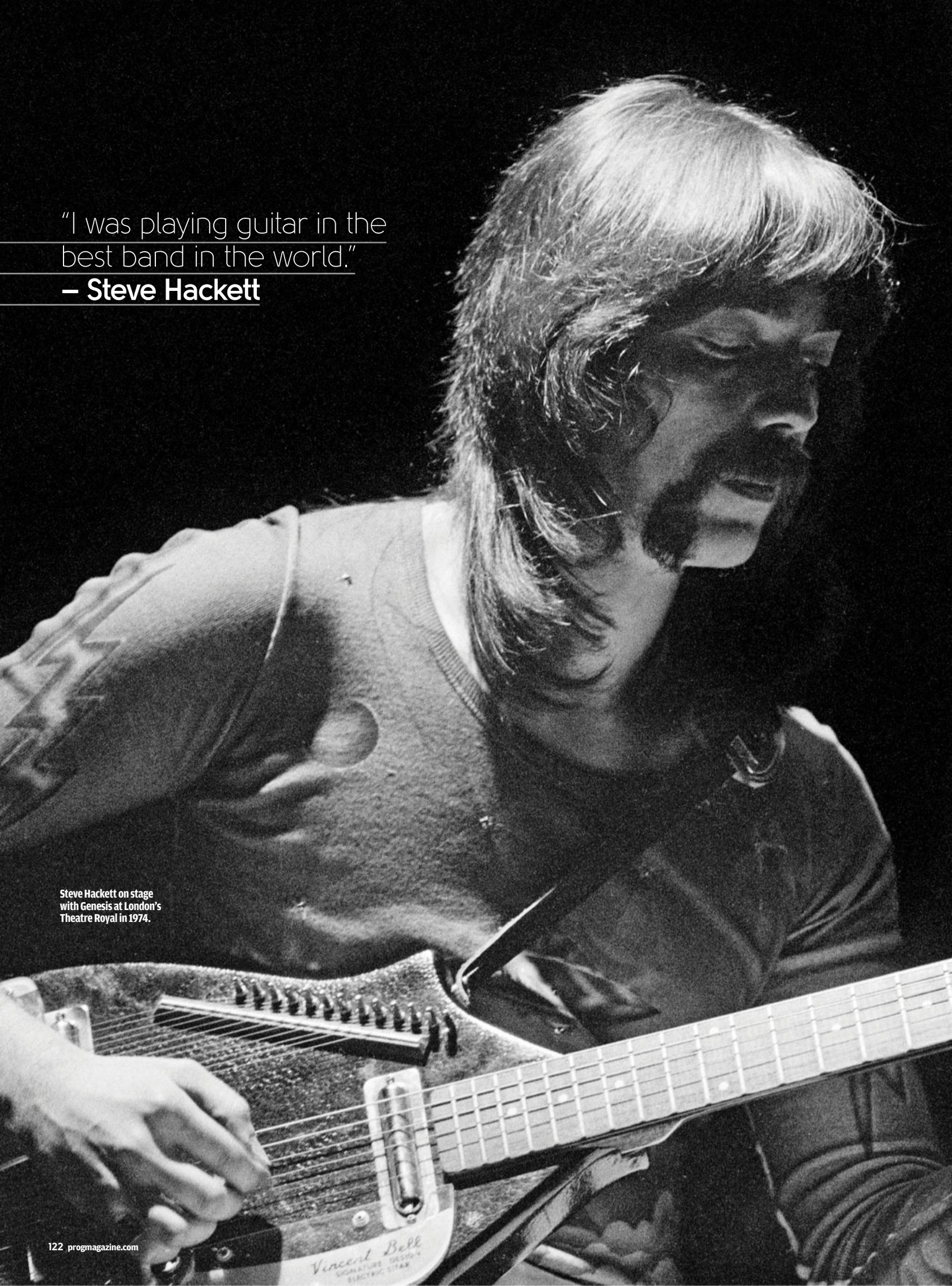
Does it surprise him that the Genesis material is still so *alive*? The demand for it seems to be growing…

"It was inspirational music back then and I was inspired by all the guys I worked with. But it's inspirational now, too. A lot of people say how much it means to them. The audience gets the chance to say that every night, and I know it moves people. Beyond that, I think I've been blessed to be able to bring that once more in front of people. It's beyond the museum doors for the glorious exhibits!"

His enthusiasm is infectious, his energy boundless. Maybe our Duracell theory is nonsense after all. All he needs to power him through another 12 months of triumph is the greatest energy source of all: music itself. Let the happiness and healing begin.

"Music still has the ability to set the world alight and lay a few ghosts to rest," he concludes. "Music changed the world — let's not forget this. And I think it can change the world again, for the better. Music can go to places that politicians can't, and it knows no borders. It's one of the greatest medicines in the world and it'll do you good. Honest, guv! It's the oxygen that we breathe and it's a great motivator. This has been a great journey and it's not over yet!"

"I was playing guitar in the best band in the world."
**– Steve Hackett**




**Steve Hackett on stage with Genesis at London's Theatre Royal in 1974.**

# Citizens Of Hope And Glory

There are obsessives for every Genesis album, but ***Selling England By The Pound***, released in 1973, resonates deeply across the spectrum of the group's admirers. To the point where **Steve Hackett**, who has become the *de facto* curator of Genesis' catalogue live, is recreating the album in full on tour later this year. But why, 45 years on, does this particular album endure?

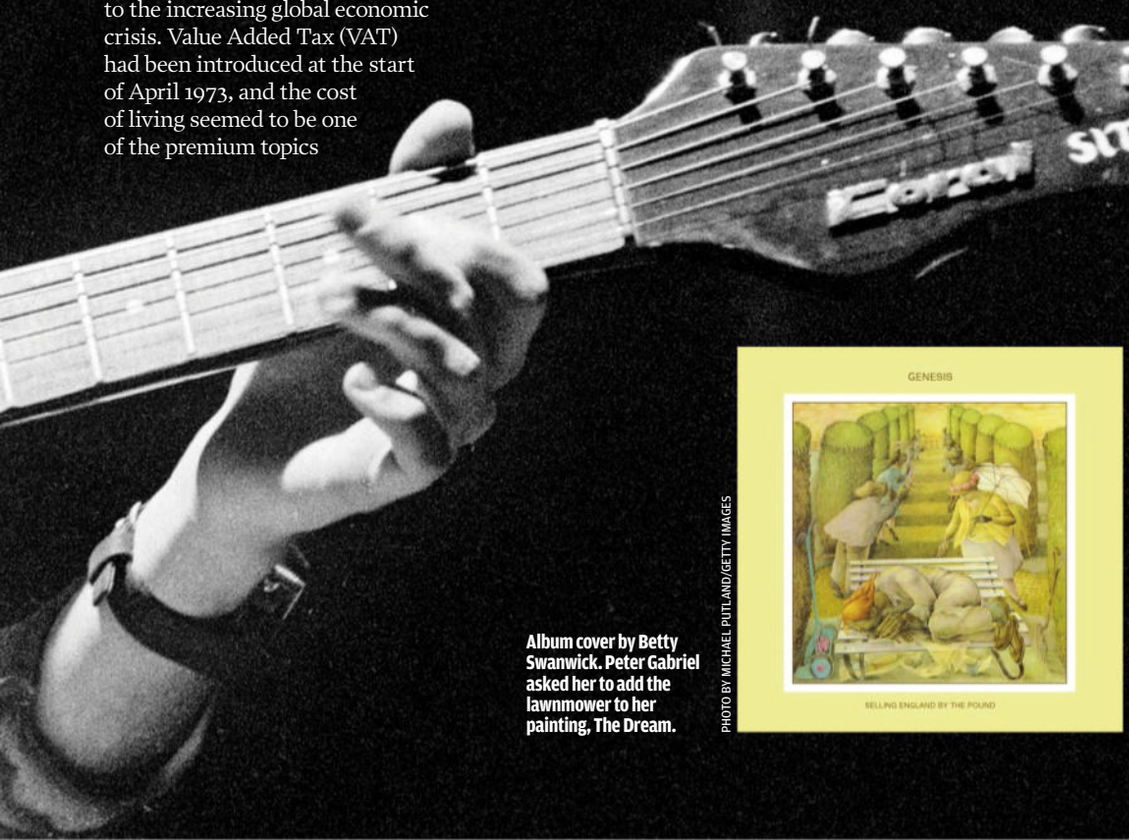
**Words:** Daryl Easlea

In 1973, Britain was at a crossroads. The Conservative government seemed to be losing control of the various industrial disputes that raged in a union-dominated workplace; inflation was spiralling due to the increasing global economic crisis. Value Added Tax (VAT) had been introduced at the start of April 1973, and the cost of living seemed to be one of the premium topics of conversation; credit cards were becoming ever more popular and national debt was spiralling. The United Kingdom was also engaged in a debate about whether they should remain in the 'Common Market' – the European Economic Community – which it had joined on New Year's Day 1973. There was a feeling that the very nature of Britishness was being eroded. In short, it seemed as if we were all going to hell in a handcart. Sound familiar?

With all of this being played out across the media, for Genesis writing about beheadings during croquet games at once seemed perhaps too frivolous, too escapist. Taking its title from a slogan in the Labour Party's manifesto, *Selling England By The Pound*, the band's fifth studio album is infused with a whimsy, a Britain at sunset, assessing how to move forward in shifting times. The word 'pound' in its title was key; aside from the obvious pun between currency and weight, the pound sterling had been one of the hottest political topics in recent history. In the preceding decade it had been devalued, decimalised and floated. Harold Wilson's phrase, "the pound in your pocket," said in 1967 when the pound was devalued by 14% to foreign markets (but still worth the same in the UK) had stuck in popular consciousness, and with a collective focus on thrift and economy, set against the financial crisis, the album's title had a snappy, contemporary feel. "*Selling England* was *very* English," Steve Hackett says. "It wasn't bucket and spade English… it was this other sense."

The story of *Selling England By The Pound* begins with a paucity of material and delay. It's strange now to think that three months seemed an eternity then: but Genesis were blocked. Coming off the triumphant *Foxtrot* tour, a proposed gig at Wembley Empire Pool in May 1973 had to be nixed because tickets couldn't be printed in time. As the band didn't have a huge stock of material prepared, the stop-gap in-concert album *Genesis Live* was released that July to capitalise on their burgeoning success. Sold at a budget price, it became the group's first UK Top 10 album.

What was to become *Selling England By The Pound* was rehearsed in a friend's home near Chessington Zoo, Surrey, across early summer 1973. "We were literally in the living room of a family house," Steve Hackett says. "Inevitably, after a few days or so, the neighbours started to complain. It was so typically Genesis. The idea that we didn't want to work in a rehearsal room, we wanted to work somewhere that's friendly and had windows, contrary to rock'n'roll thinking. It adds to the quirkiness of it, I think







**Album cover by Betty Swanwick. Peter Gabriel asked her to add the lawnmower to her painting, The Dream.**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

## AL MURRAY on *Selling England By The Pound*

Comedian and Progressive Music Awards host on the album's significance...

"This album is the band's sweet spot – Genesis' soaring creative ambition matched by their immaculate playing. Gabriel's finessed word games and more than anything else the big, big tunes that lie at its heart. The strange enduring topicality of *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight* suggests there's more to prog than English whimsy – it's an unrepeatable lament for past, present and future."

*See www.thepublandlord.com.*

that's why that album has a smile." This smile was reinforced further by the group's move to one of their usual — and, again, improbable — haunts, the Una Billings School Of Dance in London's Shepherd's Bush to continue rehearsing. Phil Collins' mother, who ran the Barbara Speke Stage School in Acton, knew Billings, which is how the band ended up there.

"Una Billings was weird enough in itself," Hackett says. "You'd be downstairs with the gob-stopper machine and the girls dancing upstairs doing their first ballet steps, all going clippetty clump, clippetty clump, you'd have this rhythm going on. It's completely mad," Hackett laughs. Collins wrote in his autobiography, *Not Dead Yet*: "Where previously we could smell freshly cut grass, we're now high on the odour of ballet pumps." Even though the group were gaining traction, they were in debt, and struggling. "When you're a young band, much of living is at subsistence level," says Hackett. "We hope our contract is going to be renewed; we hope there'll be gigs, we hope people will like it. It was a very slow process." However, they now had the seeds of material that would become some of the most-loved in their career.

*Selling England...* was recorded in three weeks in August at Basing Street Studios in West London. The band asked John Burns to produce, who had worked as engineer on *Foxtrot*. Burns was of a similar age to them, and had already had considerable experience.

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**Genesis promo pounds. Sadly not legal tender.**

WARING ABBOTT/GETTY IMAGES

**Genesis preparing to join Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City on their Selling England... tour, 1973.**

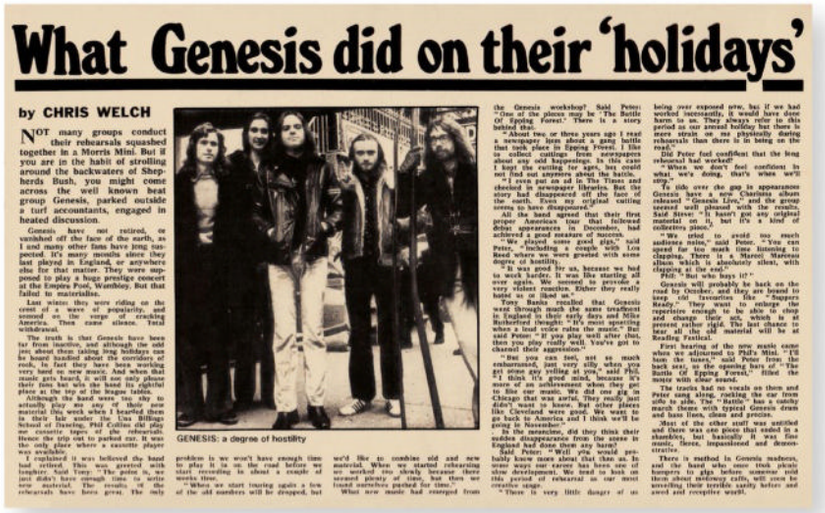
"John was great for a young band," Hackett continues. "He was very hands-on. His reassurance was key. He was also a guitarist and understood how guitars were supposed to sound. When I was doing *Foxtrot* I was using a small amp; this time I was using the full rig and giving it some welly. He was very good at capturing that — it's a very thick sound."

Although ostensibly an eight-track album, it hinges on five significant pieces, and none more so than its opener. *Dancing With The Moonlit Knight* was originally called *Disney*, and Peter Gabriel wrote the opening section's melody, while the rest of the band contributed to its later sections. But the subject matter was the most overt in reflecting this commercialisation of a troubled Britain, with Gabriel singing a folk madrigal as Britannia, posing the simple but effective question at the album's very outset: *'Can you tell me where my country lies?'* Father Thames has drowned, but the population is too preoccupied to notice, as they digest their Wimpy burgers, spending pounds to gain pounds. The Arthurian legend is invoked, and the final cry of calling the *'Knights of the Green Shield'* to *'stamp and shout'* is a pun on the long defunct Green Shield stamp-and-spend reward system. This call for an uprising to reassert Britain's place in the world delivered forlornly by Britannia is one of Gabriel's most poignant (and pun-filled) lyrics.

Musically, it begins gently before heading off into battle, showcasing the road-rested confidence of the players. "It went from Scottish plainsong to something Elgarian, to something futuristic, touching on fusion and other forms that still haven't been named," Hackett affirms. "We weren't calling it progressive at the time... we were experimenting and letting it all hang out."

Another reason for the album's enduring allure is that *Selling England...* had a snappy number that could act as an accessible calling card to the album's knottier core: *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*. Genesis always knew a good pop tune when they heard it. And *I Know What I Like...* is a *fantastic* pop song. Still unsure that he could compete with the Charterhouse core of the band, Steve Hackett decided to bring in riffs for the album rather than whole songs, as was Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks' way. "I thought that was the best way to go. I used to play it through a Leslie cabinet and Phil would join in. It was a *Foxtrot* reject, but a linchpin for *Selling England....*" Soon the other members joined in. Gabriel came up with a melody line and a lyric inspired by what was to become the album's cover painting, The Dream, by Betty Swanwick.

With its words wittily referencing the Garden Wall, Banks and Gabriel's Charterhouse band, *I Know What I Like...* is the tale of external pressure on Jacob, a young man (allegedly Genesis' roadie Jacob Finster) to conform. With Banks' irresistible chorus, Rutherford's electric sitar and Gabriel's to-die-for synthesiser riff to close, it all scuttles along with tremendous panache and humour; in fact, it makes a case for the miniscule sub-genre, glam-prog. Praised by *Sounds* for conjuring up "amazing visual possibilities with its childlike quality of far away images", it was taken from the album as a single, it reached the UK Top 40 in 1974. For many outside the cognoscenti, this was their first invitation to visit the idiosyncratic cottage industry of Genesis.



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# What Genesis did on their 'holidays'

by CHRIS WELCH

NOT many groups conduct their rehearsals squashed together in a Morris Minl. But if you are in the habit of strolling around the backwaters of Shepherds Bush, you might come across the well known beat group Genesis, parked outside a turf accountants, engaged in heated discussion.

Genesis have not retired, or vanished off the face of the earth, as I and many other fans have long suspected. It's many months since they last played in England, or anywhere else for that matter. They were supposed to play a huge prestige concert at the Empire Pool, Wembley, but that failed to materialise.

Last winter they were riding on the crest of a wave of popularity, and seemed on the verge of cracking America. Then came silence. Total withdrawal.

The truth is that Genesis have been far from inactive, and although the odd jaunt about them taking long holidays can be heard about the corridors of rock, in fact they have been working very hard on new music. And when that music gets heard, it will not only please their fans, but will put the band in a place as one of the biggest in Britain.

Although the band were not too shy to actually play out any of their new material this week when I boarded them in their lair under the Una Billings School of Dancing, Phil Collins did play me cassette tapes of the rehearsals. Hence the trip out to parked car. It was the only place where a cassette player was available.

I explained it was believed the band had retired. This was greeted with laughter. Said Tony: "The point is, we just didn't have enough time to write new material. The results of the rehearsals have been great. The only problem is we won't have enough time to play it in on the road before we start recording to shout a couple of weeks time.

"When we start touring again a few of the old numbers will be dropped, but we'd like to combine old and new material. When we started rehearsing we worked too slowly because there seemed plenty of time, but then we found ourselves pushed for time."

What new music had emerged from the Genesis workshop? Said Peter: "One of the pieces may be 'The Battle Of Epping Forest.' There is a story behind that.

"About two or three years ago I read a newspaper item about a gang battle that took place in Epping Forest. I like to collect cuttings from newspapers about strange events, and I've had them if I dug out the cuttings for ages, but could not find out anymore about the battle.

"I even put an ad in The Times and checked in newspaper libraries. But the story had disappeared off the face of the earth. Even my original cutting seems to have disappeared."

All the band agreed that their first proper American tour that followed their debut appearances in December, had achieved a good measure of success.

"We played some good gigs," said Peter, "including a couple with Lou Reed where we were greeted with some degree of hostility.

"It was good for us, because we had to work harder. It was like starting all over again. We seemed to provoke a very violent reaction. Either they really hated us or liked us.

Tony Banks recalled that Genesis went through much the same treatment in England in their early days and Mike Rutherford thought: "It's most upsetting when you get a review in the music press that says 'If you play well after this, then you play really well. You've got to channel their aggression.'

"How you can feel, not so much embarrassed, just very silly when you get encored after playing a song," said Phil.

"I think it's good mind because it's making us more determined when they go to Bath or somewhere we did really well in Chicago that was awful. They really just didn't pay much attention. But other places like Cleveland were good. We want to go back to America and I think we'll be going in November."

In the meantime, did they think their sudden disappearance from the scene in England had done them any harm?

Said Peter: "Well you would probably know more about that than us. In some ways our career has been one of slow development. We tend to look on this period of rehearsal as our most concentrated effort for time."

"There is very little danger of us being over exposed now, but if we had worked incessantly, it would have done harm to us. They always refer to this period as our annual holiday but there is more strain on me physically during rehearsals than there is in being on the road."

Said Peter but confident that the long hours in the workshop will pay off.

"What we don't feel confident in what we're doing, that's when we'll stop."

To tide over the gap in appearances Genesis have a new Charisma album released "Genesis Live," and the group seemed well pleased with the results. Said Steve: "It hasn't got any original material on it, but it's a kind of collectors piece.

"We tried to avoid too much audience noise," said Peter. "You can spend far too much time listening to clapping. There is a Marcel Marceau album which is absolutely silent, with clapping at the end."

Phil: "But who buys it?"

Genesis will probably be back on the road by October, and they are hoped to keep old favourites like "Supper's Ready." They want to change the repertoire enough to be able to drop and change their act which is at present rather rigid. The last chance to hear all the old material will be at Reading Festival.

First hearing of the new music came when we adjourned to Phil's Mini. "I'll have the tunes," said Peter, climbing in the back seat, as the opening bars of "The Battle Of Epping Forest," filled the music with clear sound.

The tracks had no vocals on them and Peter sang along, rocking the car from side to side. The "battle" which is a fairly march theme with typical Genesis drum and bass lines, climbs and precipices.

Most of the other stuff was untitled and there was one piece that ended in a shambles, but basically it was fine music, fierce, impassioned and demonstrative.

There is method in Genesis madness, and the band who once took picnic hampers to gigs before someone told them about motorway cafés, will soon be unveiling their new music early before and awed and receptive world.

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**Interview with Chris Welch in *Melody Maker*'s July 28, 1973 issue. He listened to the new Genesis album on the cassette player of a Morris Minor that was parked outside the Una Billing's School Of Dance. High tech!**

After the levity comes the gravity. One of Banks' greatest and loftiest creations, *Firth Of Fifth* was stitched together from three separate pieces of music left over from *Foxtrot*, becoming one of the group's most-loved songs. After Banks' grand piano introduction, the power of the band's arrival still surprises. It features Hackett's single best guitar solo with the group. Although we return to the world of fantasy, the suggestions of the sands of time being eroded by the river of constant change echoes the uncertainty of *...Moonlit Knight*.

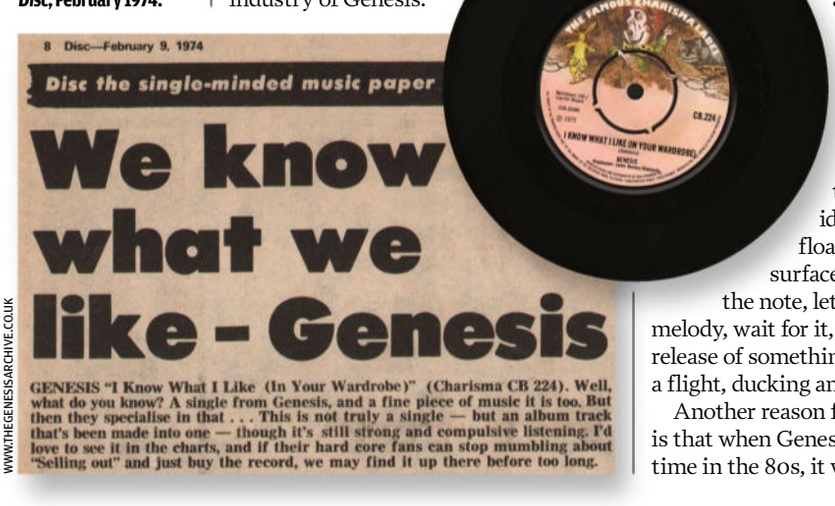
"There was a melody which had originated on piano, and seemed to only gain when it was played with other instruments," Hackett says. "I remember when we were at Una Billings it sounding like a record. I was able to improvise and come back to it — it just seemed to play itself. Because the song was about the river and the sea, I had this idea of a seagull floating above the surface, gliding, holding the note, letting it become the melody, wait for it, the tension and the release of something that looks like a flight, ducking and weaving."

Another reason for *Selling...*'s appeal is that when Genesis finally hit the big time in the 80s, it was the album that who thought it provided contrast to the high drama elsewhere.

The most problematic track on the album follows, but in a way it gives it its greatest charm, as it sits alone and frequently unloved in the group's catalogue. *The Battle Of Epping Forest* was simply one long showcase for Gabriel's voice and characterisation, a sort of modern Gilbert And Sullivan operetta. And as for subject matter, gangland warfare on the fringes of North East London was another resolute departure from the group's usual pastoral meanderings. This rich and vivid story — allegedly rooted in truth — seemed meat and drink to Gabriel, who constructed another musical comedy in the style of *Get 'Em Out By Friday*. Deceptively long at 11 minutes, it is akin to a Monty Python sketch set to music, complete with myriad voices, generous double-entendres, camp academic stereotypes (*'Harold Demure, from Art Literature'*, indeed) and little room for the instrumentation to breathe.

Tony Banks, for one, was never a fan. He told Armando Gallo in the late

> "In the early days there was a lot of comedy. Which may have been why John Lennon said that he liked us, the fact that we seemed so prepared to make complete arseholes of ourselves!" **– Steve Hackett**



8 Disc—February 9, 1974

Disc the single-minded music paper

# We know what we like - Genesis

GENESIS "I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)" (Charisma CB 224). Well, what do you know? A single from Genesis, and a fine piece of music it is too. But then they specialise in that . . . This is not truly a single — but an album track that's been made into one — though it's still strong and compulsive listening. I'd love to see it in the charts, and if their hard core fans can stop mumbling about "Selling out" and just buy the record, we may find it up there before too long.

WWW.THEGENESISARCHIVE.CO.UK

**The *...Wardrobe* single and plea to hardcore Genesis fans to stop moaning about "selling out" and buy it, from *Disc*, February 1974.**

70s, "Although the vocals are very nice, they completely ruin the song because there's too much happening — a complete battle between the vocals and the music all the way through."

It also deals obliquely again with the search for a lost England, corrupt reverends, antique shops, judgments based on what a person owns as opposed to who they are, and increasing commercialisation, and a dig at the death of the hippie dream, with a new 'pin-up guru' every week, turning alternative lifestyles into simply another commodity, 'Love, Peace & Truth Incorporated.' It became a staple of the Genesis live set for the end of 1973 and into 1974, giving Gabriel the opportunity to don stocking masks and act out some violence. "*Epping Forest* died a death in America," Hackett adds, ruefully. "Mainly because they'd never heard of Epping Forest or vicars talking like that; it's very British, isn't it? An elaborate joke but it's got its moments, too. I think there's aspects of the *Carry On* series, perhaps — it's full of Sid James meeting Kenneth Connor; it's Ealing as much as prog rock."

*After The Ordeal* acts as light relief. It is amazing that such a pretty four-minute instrumental was to prove one of *the* hot potatoes of the album. When the album was being sequenced and edited, Banks and Rutherford did not want it. Hackett did. "I had to threaten to get *After The Ordeal* on the album, as was so often the case in Genesis," he explains. In fact, to the point where he was going to leave if his idea wasn't accepted.

"If they weren't going to include all of my ideas on it, if it was going to be expurgated, I was off. I don't think anyone was expecting me to be quite so forthright at that point. I nailed my colours to the mast."

The 11-minute long *The Cinema Show* was originally intended to run as a side-long piece flowing in from *...Moonlit Knight*. "If we had done that, it would have been another *Supper's Ready* and it might not have survived as well." Hackett says. "Phil was adamant, and that was what put the kibosh on it."

After a series of sweet verses from Gabriel, with lyrics largely written by Banks and Rutherford, at six minutes, the track abruptly shifts gear from its dreamy acoustic mid-tempo as the band move into a slow-building and soon-to-be free-wheeling jazz rock instrumental leading to a climatic close; recorded with just Banks, Collins and Rutherford, it was later to provide the encouragement needed for the group to continue as a trio after Hackett left the group in 1977.

**Below: *Disc* finds tomorrow's stars in November 1973. Below right: *NME* loves the new album. As well they should, frankly.**

DISC FINDS TOMORROW'S STARS TODA

GENESIS Peter Gabriel . . . weird and wonderful fantasies

Selling records by the pound

"HE'S NOT the easiest of

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September 29, 1973

NEW MUSICAL

Albums

The Pound recovers

GENESIS: — "Selling England By the Pound" (Charisma)

GENESIS FANS unite, stand proud and be counted; get ready to say 'I told you so' to all those people who have been doubting your praise of the band.

"Selling England By the Pound" is the band's best, most adventurous album to date.

There comes a time in every band's career when everything comes together, all the ideas, the playing, everything the group has been trying to put across. And that's the case with this album.

There's not a half finished idea here, every track is worked out down to the last drum roll. There's so much subtlety that numerous listenings continue to reveal new found secrets.

"Dance With the Moonlight Night" begins the album as Peter Gabriel sings a folky lament acapella. A bit medieval, the piece features layed back guitar wandering and majestic melody lines.

Even on the first track, a difference is apparent. For starters, Tony Banks is playing more piano than organ; this is coupled with Gabriel's emotive

Peter Gabriel of Genesis

mute and soft and gentle the next.

"I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)" conjures up amazing visual possibilities with it's childlike quality of far away images. A flute comes in at the end, reminding one ever so slightly of early Traffic.

Classical themes are carefully mixed with rock, highlighted by Banks' grand master piano playing and Collins' orchestral percussion on tracks like "The Firth of Fifth" and "After the Ordeal".

"The Battle of Epping Forest" is the one that will no doubt be a grand stage production. One can easily envisage

with each song, always blending in with the creative use of moogs, mellotrons and synthesizers.

Banks makes those instruments come alive. He never reverts to easy mechanical gimmickry like so many of his contemporaries.

So forget all those supergroups, all the super hype and all those mundane 'concept' albums. Disregard those mellotron based wonders that are almost always boring. Forget all those bands that sound the same. Genesis stand head and shoulders above all those so-called progressive groups.

Even the people upstairs like this one!

The theme of the state of the UK comes into focus again with *Aisle Of Plenty*, a short reprise of the original melody of *...Moonlit Knight*. The short verse offers a series of puns about contemporaneous UK supermarkets and concludes with Gabriel watching *'the deadly nightshade grow'*. Was England going to be left under a carpet of the alluring yet poisonous plant while everyone is busy buying stuff? He and Collins call out a series of prices of consumer goods on offer. This minute and a half drifts by and links the album back to where it began, the cash-strapped UK economy of '73. This lyrical realism demonstrated that Genesis were aware of the state of the nation and their surroundings.

*Selling England By The Pound* was released in October 1973. Strikingly complex yet often deceptively simple, it heralded a different Genesis. The artefact itself looked different. It moved away from the band's now-trademark gatefold sleeve and Paul Whitehead illustrations. Its single sleeve with lyric sheet offered something more direct. Gabriel had persuaded Betty Swanwick to add a lawnmower to her painting, The Dream, which had inspired *I Know What I Like...* and for it to be used as the cover. It managed to pull off the perilous feat of retaining the English whimsy of the previous releases, while looking more in keeping with a modern jazz album.

It was also well-received. Barbara Charone wrote in *NME*: "Genesis stand head and shoulders above all those so-called progressive groups." Genesis were progressive as they were reflecting on the state of the nation, be it the bully-boy gang warfare on the fringes of London, or the threat to national identity. Gabriel's escapist vision, married with the increasingly impressive musicianship of the group was providing a suitable antidote to the increasingly grim economic landscape in the UK. By the end of 1973, *Selling England By The Pound* was Top 10 in an album chart populated by Slade, David Cassidy, Status Quo and Peters and Lee.

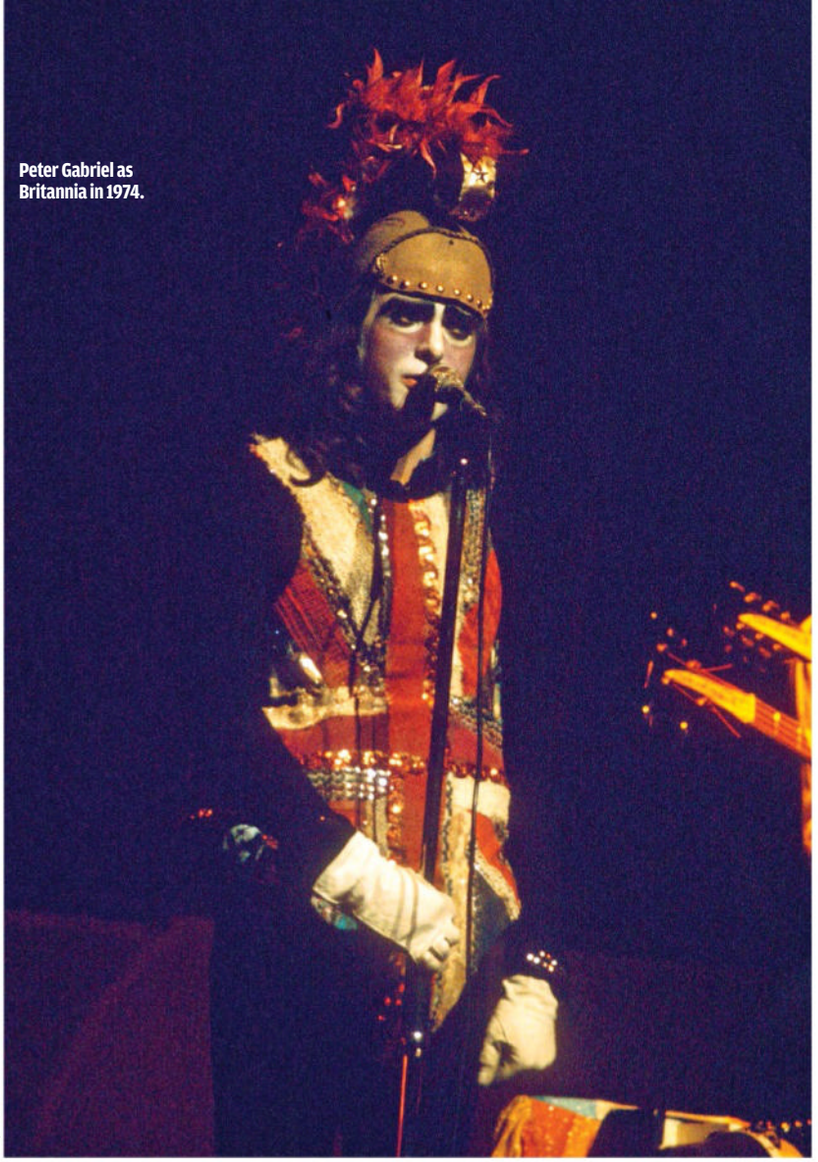
The concerts that supported *Selling England By The Pound* saw Gabriel's costumes and props getting ever more otherworldly and elaborate. There was now even a lawnmower brought on stage to assist in the narrative of *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*. The band themselves seemed to become ever more invisible; often looking like they were conducting an intense seated scientific experiment: "We were like the pit orchestra, Pete was the show," Hackett recalls. "I used

## RICHARD MACPHAIL on *Selling England By The Pound*

Friend of the band and biographer on the album's significance...

"Many of the fans who love Peter's era cite it as the best album of all. It certainly is *one* of the best. It stands on the shoulders of *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot*; by the time they came to write and record *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, things were falling apart, and although it has many moments of staggering brilliance, I have always felt that it was flawed. For me, the two stand-out tracks are *Firth of Fifth* and *The Cinema Show*. *Selling England* is an album that truly stands the test of time and has moments that still send shivers up my spine."

*Richard Macphail's My Book Of Genesis is available at www.mybookofgenesis.com.*



Peter Gabriel as Britannia in 1974.

REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

to look up from time to time with a big smile on my face."

The Selling England By The Pound UK tour saw the band comfortably filling 2,000-seater venues. Another reason for the enduring allure of the album is its accompanying promotional film, live at Shepperton Studios. The group's foothold in America was getting stronger, too. After their short tour in December 1972, Genesis had returned in March 1973 before beginning a major North American tour in November of that year. Genesis were treated with bemusement by sections of the rock audience, but the press sensed there was something afoot. They seemed to be offering a vision of exactly what British people should be: deeply eccentric, quirky. They were, if you will, selling this exaggerated version of England back to the US by the dollar.

From December 17, 1973, Genesis played six shows across three nights at the Roxy Club on Los Angeles' Sunset Boulevard. It went well: "It was one of the best welcomes we have ever had," Gabriel said. "It was our first time on the West Coast and we found we had a sort of underground mystique."

"I remember Phil saying to me very early on: to enjoy the work you do when you are playing live was really so very important," Hackett says. "People aren't going to worry about the odd gaff – what they want to know is that you're in the moment, you're doing it, you're being authentic. At the time we were doing *Selling England* we were playing the best of the two previous albums as well, I thought I was playing guitar in the best band in the world." This was paying off – they were voted 'Top Stage Band' by readers of *NME*'s annual poll, placing them ahead of all the other bands they struggled for billing with several years previously, ahead of scene leaders such as The Who and Yes.

The band toured the US again in May 1974. The tour had been enlivened by the news that John Lennon 'loved' *Selling England...*; Hackett recalled Gabriel dancing around the dressing room in response to the ex-Beatle's comments on New York radio station WNEW. "In the early days there was a lot of comedy," Hackett concludes. "Which may have been why Lennon said that he liked us, the fact that we seemed so prepared to make complete arseholes of ourselves!"

*Selling England* endures because it is the greatest and most commercial distillation of the '70-'75 group. In a way, it is the direct predecessor to *A Trick Of The Tail*, with the following *The Lamb Lies Down On A Broadway* as a unique, insular, glorious curveball. *Selling England...* was key in so many ways: it gave them a taste of a hit single; demonstrated that Collins could handle lead vocals with élan and the seeds of both Hackett and Gabriel's departure lay within (on their own they could make records full of *Epping Forests* and *After The Ordeals*). Most importantly, with their trio playing at the end of *The Cinema Show*, that Banks, Rutherford and Collins could play well with each other.

"*Selling England* is the album I'm proudest of in Genesis both as a player and for its unique quirkiness," Steve Hackett concludes. "I think it was very heartfelt."

> "It's the album I'm proudest of in Genesis both as a player and for its unique quirkiness."
> **– Steve Hackett**

## SPECTRAL LIVE

40 years old next year, Steve Hackett's *Spectral Mornings* gets a live celebration.

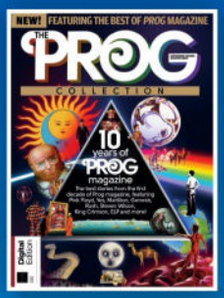
Steve Hackett enjoys the thrill of visiting different eras of his catalogue for his now-annual tours. This time, as well as playing *Selling England...* he's looking at 1979's *Spectral Mornings*.

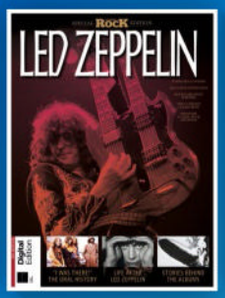
"*Spectral Mornings* rides high in my affections and those of fans. It was the time when I was first touring under my own name, with a great band. Something special happened. Every time you make an album you do the same thing: change the strings, plug in, play: even though all the ingredients might be the same, you don't really know whether the album's going to have legs or sprout wings. I was very lucky to work with a great team."

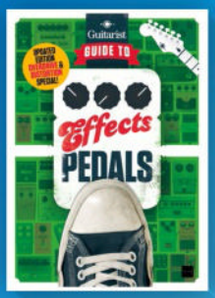
Are there any particular challenges ahead with *Selling England*? "It stands extension and expansion well. Deleted scenes are now included. Peter brought a tune to the band in the early days; although it was a band reject, decades later, I told Peter that I'd like to finish it. Nad [Sylvan] said that he'd really like to sing it, because Paul Carrack had sung it [*Déjà Vu*] on *Genesis Revisited* in 1996; we'll have that! So, the entire *Selling England...* will be part of it; most of *Spectral*, and some new stuff."

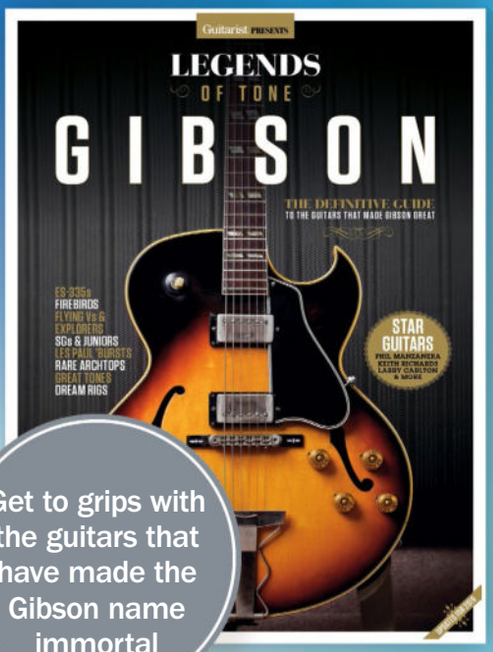
Finally, a thought that many have – would he contemplate undertaking *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* as a piece live? Hackett thinks for a moment: "Possibly, but I see it as more appropriate for Peter in its entirety." **DE**

Chart the rise of Queen, from their early years to international stardom



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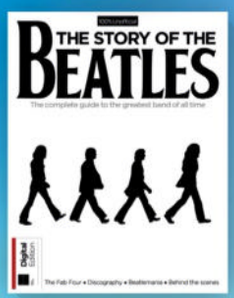

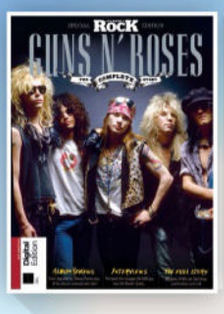

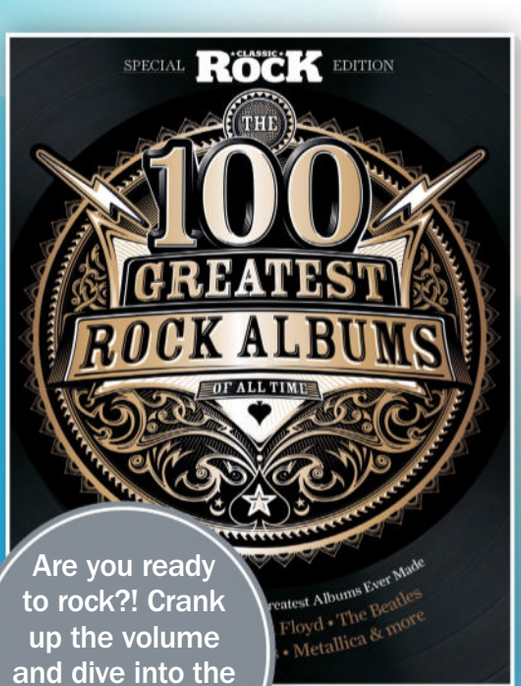


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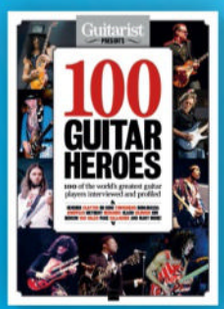


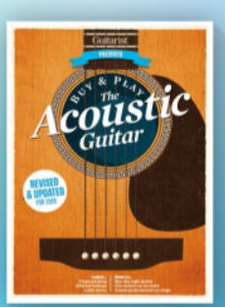


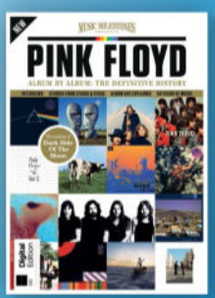


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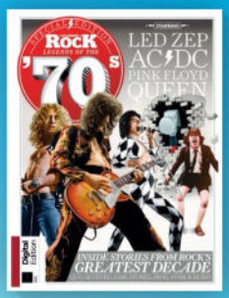


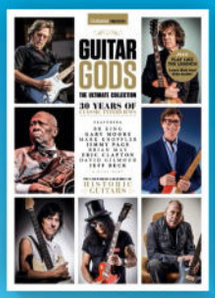

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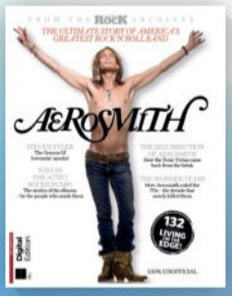

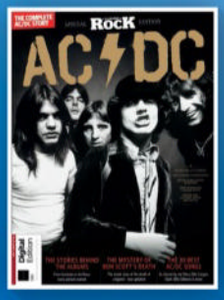


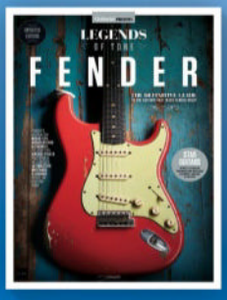


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